



CHARIVARIA

IT was captious of *The Times* to report that the President slurred a phrase in his State of the Union Message, and tended towards Spoonerisms. Anyone might slur "retaliatory deterrent," and a mention of "mallistic bissiles" makes a nice change.

"Do you prefer a foghorn to a bilge-pump?" asked a Beaverbrook headline. It was inviting readers to enter a boat-accessory competition, not, as many thought at first, to state their taste in newspapers.

ELEVEN-plus nerves among parents will soon be in full jangle. Still,



Essex Education Committee seem to have gone a bit too far in issuing a leaflet which, says the *Star*, "answers all the questions likely to be worrying them."

MORE trouble seems to be brewing for the B.B.C., over complaints from manufacturers that after each half-hourly news bulletin workers down tools for five minutes to discuss it. The Corporation may decide to reduce the bulletins to one, at five, when the hooter goes.

MR. LUDOVIC KENNEDY's nomination for Rochdale may be the beginning of a new trend in by-elections, giving candidates a chance to blame television even before polling takes place.

THE *Daily Herald*, as anxious as any other paper to attract advertisements,

cannot conscientiously claim to be taken by Top People, nor yet to appear regularly on the breakfast-tables of the rich. It exhibited a neat inventiveness,

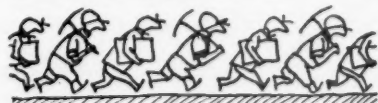


though, in claiming that the homes it goes into "have more than the average number of income-earners."

WHEN a congress of youth met the other week in New York to give their views on the proposition "Youth Faces a Changing World," the fact that of their thirty resolutions twenty-eight found fault with grown-ups and only two "called on youth to make any effort" at least suggested that the world they faced wasn't changing all that much.

SIR JOHN CHARLES, Chief Medical Adviser to the Ministry of Health, should not be too optimistic about the results of his announcement: "It is never too late to give up smoking." Smokers, reassured, are deciding to carry on for a bit.

CONSUMERS had been somewhat downcast by bulletins from the National

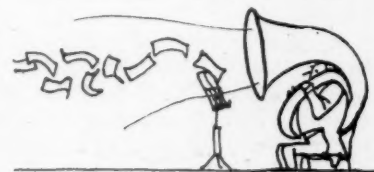


Coal Board telling of an £8,000,000 deficit, heavy losses in output, increased absenteeism and more impending wage claims, and were relieved to learn that

the Board were to do something positive about all this by setting up "a separate department for their statistical services" and appointing their "first Director of Statistics."

ONCE again America is first—with a dictionary already out containing the word "Sputnik." Purchasers will look in vain, though, for "flopnik," "dudnik," "phutnik," "goofnik" or "kaputnik."

A pamphlet urging steps to implement the recent pay award to orchestral musicians, and entitled "Facing the



Music," is naturally enough being mistaken by some people as a pamphlet urging more money for orchestral conductors.

MR. MARPLES, avid for yet more Post Office glory in 1958, is to introduce a high-speed electronic letter-sorting machine called Alfie. Customers whose names don't start with Z hope they'll have better luck with it than they seem to with Ernie.

LITTLE sensation greeted the report about a Blackpool recluse who, after living for years in three squalid rooms, left £150,000. How else does anyone expect to leave £150,000 these days?

Cabinet Crisis

THE commentators clinch and sway,
Conflicting pundits push and pull;
When no one knows quite what to say
There is no substitute for wool.

The Threat of Total Peace

THE time is about six o'clock on a Sunday evening in the late 'thirties—almost any Sunday evening. The place is a sitting-room in suburbia. We are digesting a substantial Midland tea of crumpets and Eccles cakes.

Suddenly we hear the noise we have been expecting and fearing, the news-boy's yell of "Spesheer! Spesheer!" Someone dashes into the street. "What is it this time?" says father, methodically and symbolically tamping down the conflagration in his pipe.

"It's all right, it's all right. Only another speech. What a swizz!"

Hitler's week-end threats and polemics, briefly reported in the stop-press columns of Sunday specials, did more to kill apathy and appeasement than all the warnings of far-sighted but out-of-fashion politicians. In 1938 and 1939 Hitler's ridiculous braggadocio was infinitely more useful to the West than Winston's alarms and Lord Vansittart's excursions.

In a curious way history is repeating itself. The Russians assert that the economies of Britain and the U.S.A. are in process of disintegration, that democratic capitalism is breaking up under the strain of endemic inflation, unemployment and industrial strife. Yet

whenever we are threatened by recession (our euphemism for unemployment) the Russians lend a hand with corrective treatment.

Since the war economic crises in the West have followed each other like black sheep taking a hurdle, and with unparalleled generosity Khrushchev and his predecessors have helped us to overcome our difficulties. Russia *always* turns up trumps. There was the Berlin business—the Air Lift, there was Korea, Indo-China, the Middle East . . . There are the Sputniks. Our trade gap yawns, private enterprise looks rickety, pockets of unemployment appear and promptly the Kremlin embarks on some project or other that is guaranteed to revitalize our production and trade.

It is most encouraging, this display of international friendship and global responsibility.

Without access to the minutes of Cabinet meetings it is not possible to give a precise picture of the mental processes of our leaders, but what follows must, I imagine, be roughly on the beam:

Macmillan: Gold and dollar reserves turning nasty again, Derick?

Heathcoat Amory: 'Fraid so, chiefy. Usual seasonal slide. Unemployment rising in Ulster, Glamorgan and the Weald.

Macmillan: Serious enough for Drastic Action?

Heathcoat Amory: Not quite. Special Measures should be enough. Another half per cent on Bank Rate, maybe, and a stiff note to the Capital Issues boys. Unless, of course . . .

Macmillan: You mean the Kremlin? I was forgetting. Let's take a dekho at the diplomatic bag . . . Ah, that's more like it. Bulganin to the rescue! Threatened Turkey again, and there's a mention of eight more Sputniks.

Heathcoat Amory: That should do the trick, chiefy. They'll start stock-piling again in India, South America and the U.S. So we don't have to bother about . . .

Macmillan: Don't give that silly old recession another thought, Derick. We've never had it so good.

* * * * *

There is a serious point trapped somewhere in this flippancy. If the Russians were hell-bent for peaceful economic warfare with the West they would be using all the weapons in the economist's armoury. They would be dumping their goods in our markets, fostering infant industries like mad in all uncommitted zones, cornering essential raw materials. Well, are they? And they would be doing and saying nothing to keep the decadent plutocracies on their toes. Would they?

Incurably optimistic, I am less afraid of the nuclear stuff than I am of a slump in the Western World. The cold war, even with its miserable legacy of waste, is possibly a blessing in disguise, and an outbreak of luvyduvy peace might well knock the economies of the North Atlantic powers all of a heap.

This is a time for generous gestures. Therefore I say, three cheers for Nikita Khrushchev, three severely qualified cheers. And may his dark shadow never grow less—at least not until we have learned to manage the economics of total peace. BERNARD HOLLOWOOD



Let Us Now Praise Common Men

HARSH words are spoken of the Common Man,
That shambling pachyderm of sluggish wit,
Of skull so dense that only a trepan
Can knock the simplest notion into it;
Whose moral code is writ on quivering jelly,
Whose table-talk keeps strictly to the level
Of weather, women, racing-tips and telly;
And yet, before you wish him to the devil,
Reflect how much you owe to his rejection
Of that grammatical device Inflection;
And so—unless you would prefer to chat in
Some over-sexed, case-hardened speech like Latin—
Let this one tribute to the clot be sung:
The Common Man gave us the Vulgar Tongue.

E. V. MILNER



"The trouble with these people who nail their colours to the mast—they always rock the boat."

HELL-BENT FOR THE EQUATOR

COLONEL GRIFFITHS GOING GREAT GUNS ON THIRD DASH

From Our Special Correspondent

THERE are high hopes at the headquarters of the Combined Trans-African Anglo-Welsh Expedition in London that Colonel Griffiths will be the first Welshman to reach the Equator three times in a single week. The Colonel is now fully conversant with the Kindu-Stanley Falls stretch, and providing the trains run to time there seems no reason why he should not go to and fro at will as long as his money holds out. "The Belgians have been splendid," declared the Expedition's Public Relations Officer yesterday, "particularly the station-master at Hot Spot, the almost uninhabited Halt on the Equator where it is hoped that a meeting between Colonel Griffiths' party from Port Elizabeth and Professor Potts' south-bound group

from Port Said will eventually be arranged."

The air of quiet annoyance in the Colonel's advanced base at Kindu is deeply impressive. "One cannot spend the best years of one's life in a waiting-room," the Welsh leader declared. "However, I shall continue to return to Hot Spot from time to time in case Potts turns up. If he insists on taking samples of the Congo every half mile, his chances of reaching the Equator before July are nil."

Nothing has been heard here of Professor Potts since he reported that he was aground in a flat-bottomed boat forty miles farther north than he thought. A possible explanation advanced by Colonel Griffiths is that he may have now receded out of radio range.

HELD UP BY MOSQUITOES

TOKYO, SATURDAY

Some confusion has been caused here by a message of congratulations from the Siamese base at Zanzibar, relayed via Cardiff and apparently intended for the South African Navy. "Everybody is very pleased," the message runs.

Japanese experts on tropical Africa immediately got in touch with Port Elizabeth, but meteorologists stationed there had no news, beyond a possibly garbled report from Port Said that Professor Potts was delayed by mosquitoes. The reference in this latter report, if genuine, may be to the Mosquito, a long wheeled litter with a flexible chassis for threading a path between trees. If Potts picked up one or two of these machines at Tambura or Ndoruma he may well be experiencing trouble with them in the Congo Basin. He is unlikely to have reported difficulties with insects, with which he is well equipped to deal.

It is not understood here why Griffiths should have holes in the knees of his trousers as far north as Kindu. These were reliably reported to be in evidence back at Broken Hill, where the

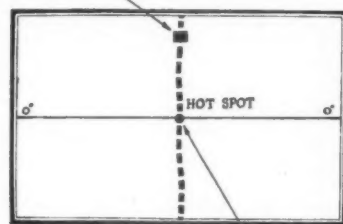
party dropped a ton of corned beef for Professor Potts' use, and could surely, it is argued, have been mended at Elizabethville, when the long scramble over the dreaded *ngombuli* (a region of serrated tufa stone) was safely accomplished. This implied criticism of the Welsh leader has not been well received in Cardiff. "We have every confidence in Griffiths' judgment and good taste in matters of tropical dress," emphasizes the Organizer (Home) of the Welsh Expedition, in a message sent characteristically to the Portuguese Balloon Base at Loanda.

MEETING DENIED

NEW YORK, FRIDAY

Strong rumours current in New York that Potts and Griffiths met early last Wednesday at a point some miles north of Hot Spot have now been traced to their source. Colonel Griffiths did, in fact, while out for a stroll on that day, run across a party of Chinese entomologists and hailed their leader with a cry of "Not Potts, surely?" The greeting was jocular, and was in any case not understood. Colonel Griffiths is greatly distressed that this trifling incident should have been misrepresented by

No sign of Prof. Potts here



Col. Griffiths keeps on arriving here

American journalists at the Equator, thus leading the world to suppose that the Professor was making quite good progress.

SOUTH FOR SUNSHINE

By PROFESSOR O. POTTS

The heat is increasing as we go farther south, but this was expected and allowed for. Progress is necessarily slow, partly because we have continually to measure the viscosity of the mud, which is what we came out here to do (it is '69 at present), and partly because tropical forests do not provide good going. It has also to be remembered, although there is no question of a race to the Equator, that whereas the sun rises on their *right* for the Port Elizabeth party, for us it rises every morning on the *left*. This is a considerable disadvantage with right-hand drive vehicles.

I am completely cut off from communication with my base, being unable to hear anything over the radio except a stream of advice from Colonel Griffiths, who tells me the Equator is extremely stuffy already and will hardly be worth a visit later on in the year. He recommends that I return to Port Said ("which in any case," he has the impertinence to add, "you appear to be rapidly approaching") and have a second try some other year.

The maximum girth of the baobab trees measured so far is a fraction under forty-five feet.

MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER

Mr. Macmillan has sent a message to everyone connected with the Trans-African Expedition expressing his confidence that if we all march forward in the same direction success is sure. This is understood by Colonel Griffiths to be an order to Professor Potts to head north.

H. F. ELLIS

Clutter in the Cloisters

By CHARLES REID

"The Carmelites," opera by Francis Poulenc with text by Georges Bernanos, has its English première at the Royal Opera House to-morrow

A GIANT electric bulb, hurtful to the eye, hangs from the painted ceiling, throwing a wide, wan light. The inside of the Opera House is a forlorn, plushy barn with dirty gildings. It always looks like that at eleven in the morning, moral zero-hour in any theatre.

A production rehearsal of *Carmelites* is on. Nuns in knitwear and balloon skirts pace with praying hands, sit on a refectory bench, swallow from empty soup bowls. In the orchestra pit a young man in black spectacle frames plays a lidless grand piano, sending up a sort of submerged clangour. In the stalls circle an aproned workman is rescrowing door hinges. Standing up for a moment he stares at the stage, fists on hips. He scratches a puzzled ear.

I do the same myself. Nobody could say the proceedings were understaffed.

This shift there are two conductors (Mr. Kubelik upstage, John Mathieson in the pit) and four stage managers on the job. Whether Mr. Kubelik and Mr. Mathieson are conducting for each other or whether just anybody can join in is not clear to me. A seventh and more decisive personality is Miss Wallmann, the producer. Miss Wallmann wears an array of yellow hair, a pale eaglet's profile and, at all times, bone-coloured gloves. Her voice pierces the morning wanness like a skewer.

"No. That will not do. Don't stand there. Stand *there*." ("Where's *there*?" somebody whispers.) "Now. Ta-ta-ta-pom. No. Quite wrong. Give me three bars before 57, conductor. Again."

The submerged clangour and tinkle resume.

In the o.p. wing stage-hands shift a hunk of the Castel di San Angelo, needed for to-morrow's *Tosca*. Francis Poulenc had been meditating behind it. He stands revealed: cropped head, blunt features and all. A prosperous corn-dealer one would say. He is in laudatory mood. *Punch*? Ah, *Punch*! For fifty year or more his father was an *abonné*. He has read it since so big, ah-ah-ah. Yes, *Punch* he loves. England he loves.

Mr. Britten's music he loves. *Turn of the Screw*! Ah, marvellous!

Anything he hates, by any chance? What about the N.B.C. television film of *Carmelites* which came out last month?

Poulenc's bulky nose wrinkles violently. He almost sneezes with scorn. "Orrible!" he exclaims.

Then: "But you must not write that in your paper. That is private, between us, for ourselves, you understand."

"But it isn't private at all. Your bad opinion of the N.B.C. *Carmelites* is all over the theatre."

"If you write it in your paper I shall deny. I shall say I never said it."

"The more you deny the more I shall insist."

"But the papers exaggerate so. They do not always give all of the facts."

"What are the facts about the N.B.C. film?"

"Well, then, I tell you. Singing excellent. Patricia Neway excellent. Leontyne Price excellent. All the singers excellent. But the tempi too rapid. The scenery bad. The château of the Marquis de la Force and the Place de la Révolution don't even look French. And the whole thing too long. That was because there were no act-breaks. *Carmelites* doesn't lend itself to television."

Gian-Carlo Menotti said much the same to me when B.B.C. television produced his *Saint of Bleeker Street*. I never came across an opera that did lend itself to television. It is composers who do the lending. Martyrs to the cathode-ray medium, they sit back helplessly with folded hands while fees rain into their laps. Couldn't they stand up for a change and shout "My

opera is for the theatre. That's where it's going to stay. Be off with your cameras. And your contract forms. I will lend myself no longer."

In the flies men with tattooed arms put down their picture mags, haul up the Marquis's library, lower a cloister in its place. A squad of Scots Guards, hired supers all, who have been waiting on plush since yesterday, wonder if they'll ever see their costumes and what those costumes are going to be, because so far nobody's given them a clue.

Taking a flat-iron from Sœur Blanche, Miss Wallmann shows her how to iron with slow strokes to the curtain-music of Scene III. "One... two... three... Up with the iron. Now down with it. Then flop your head on the handle in despair. No, no. Again. Three bars from the end, conductor. Ta... ra... ra... *pom!*" Stage managers hover and quiver helpfully. One flicks the leaves of a score. Another scribbles on a clipboard. A third bites on his pencil. A fourth cuts the air with a riding-crop.

The two conductors conduct the flat-iron with flowing hand movements. Nobody pays attention to them.

A backstage conclave feels sick about one of Sœur Mathilde's lines in the scene where the mob surrounds the convent. The translation was flown from New York and smells like it. Mathilde's line reads:

You must go at once and take a look at the little door in back.

The nuns' father confessor says "*In back* is pure waterfront Brando. Did somebody order these words out of Sears Roebuck?"

The conclave substitutes:

You must go at once and take a look at the little vestry door.

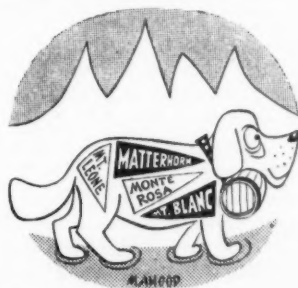
America has taken a knock but quickly recovers. At the stage door a party of singers and technicians is being rounded up for Grosvenor Square.

"What's on?"

"They're showing us the N.B.C. *Carmelites* film."

"But Poulenc says it's 'orrible.'"

"My dear man, Embassy parties are never 'orrible.'"



A Journey Round My Book-Matches

Sidelights on the Sidewalks of New York

By J. B. BOOTHROYD

BARS are dark in New York. Some say this is to flatter the ladies, others that it represents a guilt-hangover from Prohibition. My own view is that it is meant to make it easier to pinch the book-matches which lie around everywhere and may thus be carried to all corners of the globe and their advertising matter widely read and digested. Assurances that the manage-

ments intend the matches to be pinched make it no easier for the Englishman to pinch them. In his own country he is expected to put twopence in a box for spastics, and the absence of such boxes in the bars of New York makes him feel stealthy and ashamed. Often his more sophisticated companions have to hold him down while they cram book-matches into his waistcoat pockets. In

the end he is glad of this, as it serves as some sort of guide as to where he was the night before.

My favourite New York book-match is, in fact, a lie. It says on it "United Nations. Delegates' Dining-room." I never went in the delegates' dining-room. These particular matches had been missorted by some branch of the general secretariat and were lying on the bar in the delegates' lounge. The barman, whom my more sophisticated companion addressed as Walter, and who had UN in a circle on his tunic,



"I thought a little occupational therapy might do him good, doctor."

pressed them on me quite embarrassingly, and regretted that he was at the moment fresh out of swizzle-sticks marked UNO, which seem to be in great demand as souvenirs. It is a good thing, no doubt, for them to be carried to all corners of the globe and their advertising matter widely read and digested. My impressions of UN were of high spirits and bonhomie on all sides. Everywhere was laughter and the clink of raised glasses. Blondes ran from behind screens, laughing. The lift-girls were inviting passengers to their parties. A young man with white hair, carrying two gins and claiming to be in search of a telephone, kept on emerging from swing doors, and on being asked why two gins insisted that one was for his boss. It is fair to add that the Assembly was not sitting, and that this was three days before Christmas.

If the haul of book-matches from my hotel is inexcusably large this is because my small but compact suite there had eleven ash-trays containing book-matches no sooner pocketed than replaced. My impressions of the hotel were of (a) surprise, because super-efficiency, of which New York hotel administration is well known to be the epitome, was baffled by a request to supply a plaster for a cut thumb, and later gave me a message from a Mr. Long of A.B.C. who turned out to be a Miss Lang of B.B.C., (b) suffocation by air-conditioning, (c) indigestion from cloth bread, and (d) pleasure at finding no mark of oppression on the coloured lift-girls, who more than once gave me a stern talking-to for pressing the Up when I wanted to go down.

The Editorial Restaurant and Bar inscribes its book-matches "The Gateway to Steak Row, 155 East 45th." As to that I cannot speak. I had eaten my steak farther down, or maybe up, the Row, at Danny's Hideaway, where a page came paging a Mr. Bullride, and turned out to have a message for me to meet a friend in the Editorial. As I did not at this time know that the Editorial was practically next door this caused me to get wet through for the second time that day, hailing Yellow Cabs which were already engaged but had no way of saying so. "How do I get a cab?" I finally asked the driver of one arrested by traffic lights nearby. He replied "Friday, Christmas, and wet?" and drove spectacularly off.



"Mac's in Pakistan, Dulles is heading for Ankara—are you sure you got those invitations right?"

At the Roosevelt (where a Mr. Hocken, of Yonkers, with whom I had fallen in while sheltering in a bar on East 40th, introduced me to his wife, who claimed to be the President of a Colour TV System, and had photographs of her family in an album bound in silver and as heavy as lead) no book-matches were on view, being no doubt in another part, where Guy Lombardo was playing; either that, or other members of my party had got there first and cleaned them out. My party were pretty unscrupulous like that. On the 'plane, where hospitality was as rife as anywhere and a steward constantly passed among us with gifts, many of them had to take the book-matches in their teeth, as they already had champagne in each hand; in the end there was a shortage, and the matches, which in early distributions read "B.O.A.C. MAJESTIC LUXURY SERVICES," were scaled down to "B.O.A.C. CORONET TOURIST SERVICES." These, not worth retaining as souvenirs, were contemptuously put to actual work, lighting the cigars.

My Greenwich Village haul was limited to one book of matches, half used, which a girl at the next table left on mine after asking me to confirm that her young man's shirt was not white but a shade of pink. I did this gladly.

It seemed worth it, as I might not have got any matches at all, only a plate of those black sea-shells which litter coast-lines everywhere speaking of a marine life long ended. It was only after I hadn't had any of these that I found they were clam chowder. I am vague as to how this delicacy intruded into the menu of El Chico, described on its matches as "New York's most typical Spanish Restaurant. Close Cover before Striking. As Spanish as Spain."

There are gaps in my shelf of book-matches. Saks of Fifth Avenue had none, the Empire State had none (only a tin lapel-badge saying "I've been up"); there were none at my agent's, who promised me "a good cup of English tea" and welcomed me with a tumbler of dry martini; nor at the doctor's on West 43rd, where I got the biggest thumb bandage I've ever seen for five dollars. At the bar where *New Yorker* friends took me there were none—nor on the B.B.C.'s floor (the 33rd) of the Rockefeller Plaza, where I should have arrived promptly but for *New Yorker* friends who forced me into the *Time-Life* building instead (no book-matches). All the same, it was a fairly representative collection on the whole. I had less than two days to make it in, after all.

An International Affair

By E. M. MITCHELL

NOWADAYS, what with Sputniks and Trade Delegations and so on, the younger end seem to be getting the idea that nobody had ever heard of the Russians before 1956. Why, I can remember them as far back as 1930, when I was a prominent figure in a meeting between representatives of Great Britain and Soviet Russia. I'm just a housewife and mother now, but in 1930 I was right in the hub of things.

That year I was appointed technical translator and interpreter to one of the largest steel firms in the country. The appointment was the result of a fantastic chain of coincidences, triggered off by the fact that the man who had the job before me had got the new office manager's fingers trapped between his desk and the wall.

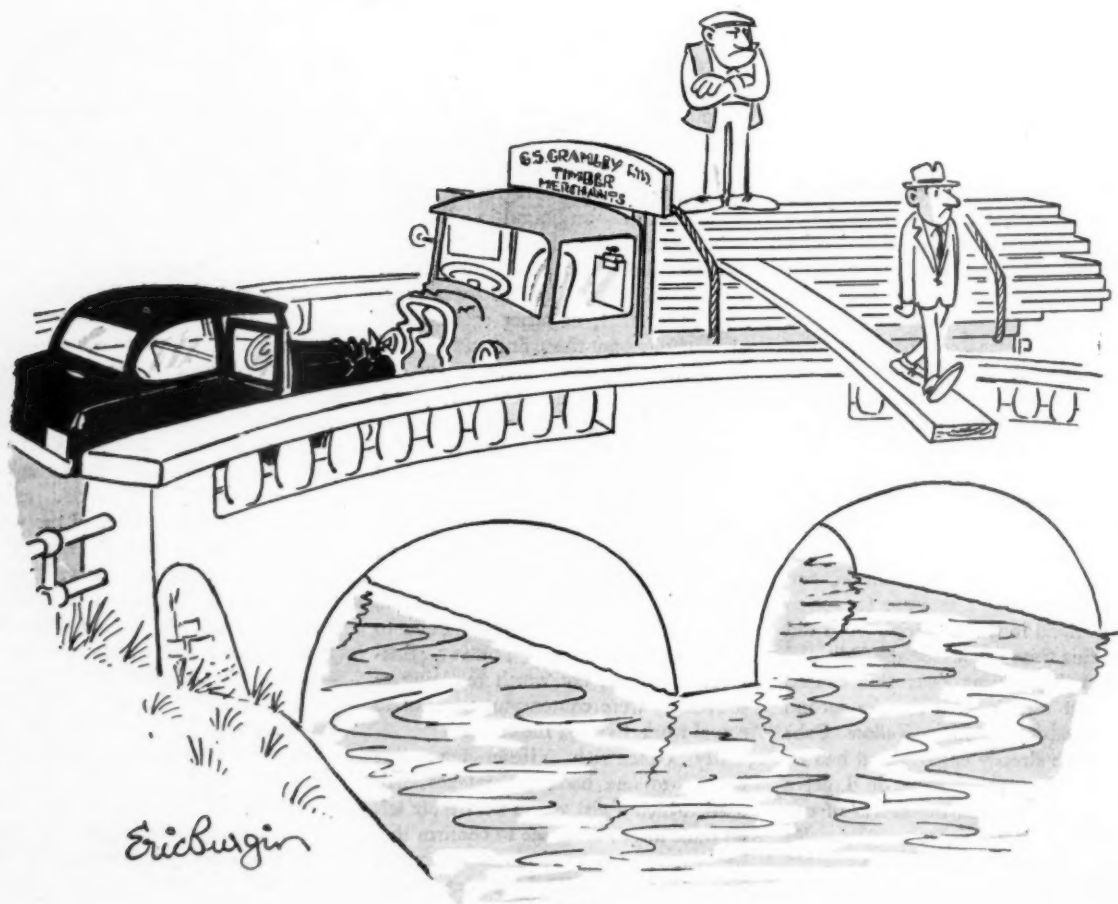
There I was then, nineteen years old,

*Bluff helps if you're not
sure of the language*

on a bright autumn day in 1930. I was busy with a copy of *Stahl und Eisen* which had been delivered to me about an hour before. A note, initialled by the Director of Research, was pinned to the front. This read "Please let me have translation pages 45 to 50 IMMEDIATELY. URGENT!" In view of the urgency I'd got down to the job right away and with the help of four dictionaries had got as far as translating the title, which read "Relation of Grain Structure to Critical Temperature in Alloy Steel Ingots." It looked fine to me.

I was just going to the cloak-room for a smoke before tackling the next bit when the door opened and the office

manager burst in. Even for a man who habitually rushed about as though his trousers were on fire at the back his manner was exceptional, and the news he brought with him almost paralysed me with terror. I was to act as interpreter, that very afternoon, at a meeting between Mr. Walters, Wire Department Manager, and a Mr. Zhenkov, technical representative of a Russian Trade Delegation who had a contract to place for wire. I wasn't expected to know Russian. Mr. Zhenkov was a fluent German speaker. It was all arranged. The meeting was to be held at the Royal Victoria Hotel. "Ready at 3.15 sharp," said the office manager, bounding away.



I was nervous of Walters, who was reputed to know more about wire than anyone in the country. In the sumptuous works car he lolled back in moody silence, scowling at his fingernails.

Mr. Zhenkov was waiting for us in the hotel lobby and was instantly recognizable. He was tall and broad, with a short fluffy black beard and piercing eyes, and was wearing a suit which looked as though he might have run it up himself in his spare time. To my surprise he greeted us with effusive joy. I couldn't actually catch anything he was saying, but I put this down to the beard and the state of nerves I was in.

We sat down and tea was brought. It didn't seem my place to open the conversation in the presence of these two technical experts, so I just waited, and when Zhenkov handed out cigarettes I accepted one and took a deep draw to calm myself in readiness for the ordeal ahead. I managed to prevent myself falling to the floor, and after that was careful to hold it well away from me. Walters, less polite, stubbed his cigarette in the ashtray after one draw. "By gum!" he said. "By gum!"

It was Zhenkov who opened the conversation, and I didn't get a word of it. I felt terrible, almost faint, what with the fumes of the horrible Russian tobacco and the realization of my position, committed to carrying on an important conversation in German with a Russian who appeared to have an impediment in his speech. Zhenkov and Walters looked at me expectantly. What was he likely to have said? Something about the weather? Trade conditions? I had to make a start somewhere, so I turned to Walters and said "Mr. Zhenkov is prepared to discuss the wire contract now." At least it was something, and Zhenkov could correct me if I'd got it wrong.

"Ask him what sort of wire he wants, what he wants it for, what sizes and how much," said Walters, getting down to brass tacks, "then I shall have something to go on."

I turned to Zhenkov and put these questions to him in my best German. He looked at first puzzled, then a look of annoyance spread across his face and his head began to wag from side to side in an emphatic denial.

"Nein, nein, nein!" he finally burst out. "Mumble, mumble yishnya ernyeshny ZWEI MILLIMETER!"



"This is what comes of merging civil aircraft manufacturers with military ones."

There, I'd got it first time. I turned to Walters. "They're wanting some two-millimetre stuff," I said nonchalantly.

"Ask him what he wants it for," said Walters. "Does he want it to keep his rabbits in or to re-string his zither?" I left out the bit about the rabbits and zither and asked Zhenkov for what purpose the wire was intended. He seemed rather put out by the question and took a slip of paper out of his pocket and consulted it earnestly. Then his head started to wag again. "Brz yeznyem mumble, mumble," he said, and relapsed into sullen silence. We were stuck again, so I had to give it another shove. It seemed clear enough.

"He says," I translated to Walters, "that he is not at liberty to say at the moment."

"Ask him," said Walters, not changing his expression, "if he's got any ideas in his blasted thick head, or if it's a complete blank."

Zhenkov had been watching Walters closely while he spoke, but at these words he brightened up considerably. He had his slip of paper out again and was running a stubby fingertip up and down it. "Ja, blank! Ja, blank!" he exclaimed in a paroxysm of joy, having found the place he wanted. It looked as if this was the end. I couldn't see why it should make a man so insanely happy to admit that his mind was a complete

blank. I took a firm hold on myself. We were speaking German, weren't we? Of course! I had it! "Blank"—German for "bright." "They want a bright drawn quality," I said to Walters.

We seemed to be getting somewhere at last. We'd got a size and now a quality. I leaned forward a little to see if I could read anything else off his slip of paper. Zhenkov snatched it up, but it was too late. What I had seen wiped out my nervousness in a flash. It was a crib, with a list of Russian words down one side and the German equivalents down the other. This blighter was a phoney. *He didn't know German.*

For a brief instant our eyes met and I let him know that I knew. I was prepared to play ball with him, but he drew back haughtily and I saw that he meant to play it out to the last. I didn't bother any more. Walters gave me a lot of information and I fairly threw it at him, knowing he wasn't understanding a single word, though he listened attentively and nodded now and then. At last I came to the question of

tolerances. We required, I told him, a tolerance of . . . At this point Zhenkov came to life. Before I could get around to saying just what tolerances we could work to, he held up his hand and said, quite clearly, "*Nein!*"

"He can't accept our tolerances," I told Walters.

Walters was indignant. "He can go to the devil," he said, fierce in defence of his firm's wire. "There's not another firm in the country can do it finer than that. I've had about enough o' this chap. Let's get off home."

I expressed our pleasure at the opportunity we had had of meeting him and our regrets that it had come to nothing and we rose to go. Zhenkov, no doubt in pure relief that he was to be rid of us, saw us affably out of the hotel. I put him to one final test. Before we parted I said to him in slow and careful German, not missing a single subjunctive, "If you were to let your beard grow longer you could tie it on top of your head and keep your ears warm during the long winter nights." The

smiling courtesy of his manner finally convinced me that I hadn't been mistaken. We parted the best of friends, all three of us.

A day or two later I saw the Commercial Manager's report on the interview. It contained an enthusiastic account of the efficient way in which I had handled the interpreting.

As a result of this episode I got a ten-shilling rise in my pay packet and gained so much in self-confidence that I had not the slightest hesitation in sending a note to the Director of Research and informing him that, owing to pressure of work, it would be a week or ten days before he could have the translation from *Stahl und Eisen*. In the great world of industry and commerce, built by men for men, I was beginning to know my way around.

A Cat Communing

I MET at midnight, when the moon was pale,
A cat communing with the *Daily Mail*.

His head was bowed, and in the shadowed mews
He kept his nose two inches from the news.

He was a cat looked up to by his friends
As a wide cat, informed of current trends,

A cat that kept abreast, a cat *au fait*
With all the problems of the present day,

A cat equipped to speak on many themes—
Politics, portrait-painters, pensions-schemes;

A cat that knew how atom bombs were made,
And who presided at the Board of Trade;

A sober and a philosophic cat,
That in the midnight mews serenely sat

Waiting for Godot or for Peter Grimes . . .

But not a top cat. Top cats take *The Times*.
R. P. LISTER



"I assure you, ladies, that if a 'plane carrying an H-bomb crashed there wouldn't be the slightest danger—unless of course you got hit by the 'plane.'"

Champagne for the Head Girl's Hockey-Boot

SIRIOL HUGH JONES considers Roedean as
a cradle for the Palladium

THE other day I was poring over one of those personality-sponsored ads that add such vivid interest to our humdrum times. This one was all about a lady entertainer, who, in the dashing words of the copy-writer, likes cooking, swimming, curly poodles, violins and fun (nothing wrong with that for a full, rich, nuclear-age life). A part of the message seemed to require some sort of answer. "And how many Head Girls and Games Captains do you know," it suddenly said, getting flustered, "with the voice and the charm to go straight to the top of the bill in variety, and straight to the hearts of millions."

Well, now. Let's think this thing out together. Easy does it. As one who never got nearer than saluting distance of a Head Girl or Games Captain (though I once played an Away match in the Second XII lacrosse team when the First Reserve had a bilious attack) I am interested to know whether this makes me a more likely bet for going to the top of the bill in variety, if not necessarily straight to the hearts of millions.

Honestly, they may be right at that. Head Girls and Games Captains often have great big voices from years of yelling "Shoot, you fool!" and "Tackle her, Cover-Point, or the day is lost," and "Straight to the Prefect's Room, the girl with the egg-stained cardigan" across windswept open spaces. But I can't recall charm being much of a qualification for the job. There was that painful time I well remember when the Founder's marble bust was crowned with a pie-frill before Leaving Prayers, and the Head Girl and absolutely all the Games Captains were as huffed as could be and simply made no effort to go straight to the hearts of millions. Hundreds, then. There was a tidy number of us at the time.

Maybe Dinah Shore qualifies, having been a cheer-leader in her class of '38 (and later majoring in sociology). She's not done so badly for a dedicated academic. Margaret Rawlings went to Lady Margaret Hall, but I don't know

about being Games Captain; and in spite of that really very powerful voice she has revealed an almost negligible interest in getting to the top of the bill in variety. Better rule her out.

The implication seems to be that if you're setting up as a variety agent it's no good hunting around in the Pres' Common Room and the privileged end of the Pav. I must say I hate to admit it. You'd think a good word of command, a sporting talent for leadership, a keenness to accept responsibility, and a well-muscled hockey-calf would be just the thing to rock them at the Palladium any day of the week. But the academic life certainly seems to cut a girl off from things. With sociologists hard at it balancing up female fertility statistics and honours degrees, they're obviously anxious about whether even the simplest non-academic activities aren't beyond the scope of the girl with the first-class mind.

When I was but a girl in knee-socks and wooden-soled shoes (we had deferred call-up, the Wrens had sheer stockings, fair's fair), I and another simple academic girl used to read our essays on Elizabethan Drama to a charming Fellow of a college in the Broad. After we had done our worst, and I don't remember that we ever did much better, and while our brains were reeling under the influence of one glass of his sherry, he would put forward his theory of how all women could be roughly divided into Buns and Horses. Being cheerful girls and anyhow confused by sherry and the sub-plot of *The Revenger's Tragedy*, we never took it personally nor volunteered much of a counter-attack to the discussion. But I've sometimes brooded about it since.

Maybe it's not Mind that inhibits Bust (see Miss Mansfield and her ever-present Gems from Montaigne) so much as an early conditioning to Authority. Come

to that, how many Head Girls and Games Captains do you know who've gone to the top of the bill in mountaineering, market research, hydraulics and industrial relations? Just how many Head Girls do you know?

The world is probably full of chorus girls mourning a lost leader, one who might have really made the grade in the big production number Act II if she hadn't fallen for the fatal lure of the Netball Cup. Just for a handful of silver she left us, just for a medal... If they offer you the Blackboard Monitor's job next term, don't touch it, girl. It's the thin end of the wedge. That way you'll never get to understudy the girl who carries on Michael Flanders' hat.

"One can imagine only too easily how the kernel of the idea for the new Ealing comedy, *Barnacle Bill* at the Empire, was hatched."

Sunday Express

By a nuthatch?



IONICUS

The Hastings Episode

By CLAUD COCKBURN

WHILE it was actually happening, in the waiting-room at Hastings station, the experience was possibly even more disconcerting than wonderful. The dog, the concurrent phenomena, and the episode at the window made a jolting impact which momentarily blurred their wider significance. But in the train for London, reflecting—not with calm, certainly, but comprehensively—on the astounding occurrence and all that it might imply, Feathers found sheer wonder uppermost among his emotions.

In this first-class carriage two fellow citizens, strangers to him, glared morosely at their newspapers. At all times Feathers liked to enter into friendly converse with others, but had often been rebuffed by the morose, or by those of a solitary turn of mind. But how the defences of these two would crumble, how their eyes would shine with excited interest, their tongues wag with eager questions, when he told them of his experience in the waiting-room!

He laughed out loud with pleasure as he thought of it. One of the strangers gave him a dirty look, and the other snapped his paper with a twitch which furiously condemned alike the behaviour of Middle Eastern politicians and people who laughed in railway carriages for no good reason.

Feathers and his quest for audience participation

A bad start, certainly, but in a few minutes, some little ice-breaking gambit completed, they were going to understand Feathers' excitement and share it. He made gambit with lighted match for cigarette, and Citizen A stared through match, took out gold-plated lighter. He made gambit with brisk comment on day's news. Citizen B acted as though comment were addressed to A; A as though he thought it must be B's privacy upon which Feathers presumed to intrude. Losing his head, Feathers babbled somewhat. A, with a look of disgust, turned to B and said "What about going along for a cup of coffee in the diner? Quiet in there."

They lumbered off like offended elephants.

In a traffic jam between Charing Cross and the office Feathers chatted with the taxi-driver through the communicating window.

"Just came up from Hastings," Feathers said. "A pretty odd thing happened just before I left."

"I like Hastings," the driver said. "Went down there last year for my holiday. Course, you go to a place like that, you want to pick and choose.

Some places prices can be wicked if you don't watch out. Get on with it, you perisher, light's green, isn't it?"

At the office Melrose said "Oh, good to see you. Half hoped you might be able to make the earlier train. Awful lot to discuss. How was Hastings? You saw the Ormsbys, I take it?"

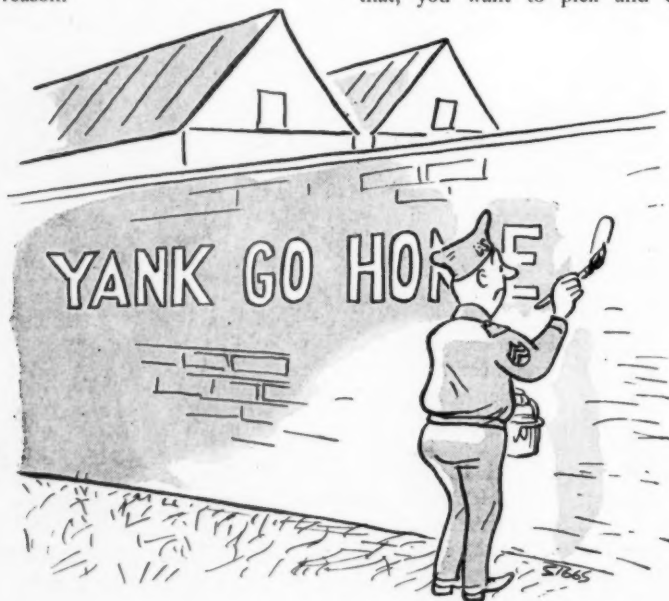
"No. Were they there?"

"Extraordinary thing," said Melrose. "They were quite definitely going to Hastings. And if you were staying with the Merrimans the Ormsbys are friends of theirs. What an amazing thing. Hope you didn't meet them and cut them by mistake. Oh, well, no time to go into it now. Do have a look at this letter. Want your opinion."

On his way to lunch in Eaton Square Feathers was on the whole glad that his experience had remained, so to speak, *intact*. It was the kind of thing Mrs. King, his hostess, would appreciate to the full—the kind of thing the sort of people who would be at a lunch-party of Mrs. King's would appreciate to the full, too. Looking at them while they all drank sherry he was sure of it. Dr. Klugmann was an alert fellow, brilliant but far from unsound. He would follow the whole thing up and investigate thoroughly. And when he saw interest displayed by both Klugmann and Mrs. King, Penrose would put his astute nose to the trail too and quest along it until he drove the quarry into an article for *Nature* or *The Scientific American*.

Feathers was in no hurry. Confident in the powers of his conversational mount to make up any amount of ground he wanted in the last four or five furlongs, he was content, as they left the *schnitzel* behind, to see Klugmann leading from Mrs. Braithwaite, with Penrose lying third. Judging his moment admirably, Feathers then said "It seems to me, the real trouble with all that twaddle about flying saucers and outer space, and little men from Venus and so on, is that it probably shuts people's minds—insensitivizes them, if you know what I mean, to equally strange and probably far more significant phenomena. People conditioned to see one miracle don't see another."

"Proceed," said Penrose. "I take it that you . . ."



"Well, yes," Feathers said. "It's something that happened to me this morning."

Then the ground opened in front of him like a Mexican earthquake. He vividly recalled how the Braithwaites, people of major importance in his business and social life alike, had, ten days ago, invited him to their Gloucestershire house for the week-end, and how he, crazy with thoughts of Miss Merri-man at Hastings, had deeply regretted—had sworn that he had to go that week-end on business to see a client in Inverness. Inverness had been chosen because the distance immediately gave the quietus to any Braithwaite suggestion of seeing client first, coming on afterwards for week-end. My God, if he had only said "Worthing" or "Eastbourne" the situation could still have been saved. But claim that one was in business conference in Inverness on Saturday, and chanced to be on Hastings railway station on Monday morning? No dice.

Penrose said "Yes? What exactly happened?"

Feathers' mount gasped, staggered, and slithered to the ground. "It wasn't," he mumbled, "something that actually happened. It was something I was just thinking about—in the train. The train from Inverness. And incidentally, whatever people say, I think the service is improving. Last time I travelled from Scotland . . ."

The consensus was that whatever had happened to Feathers' ill-starred talking point, the poor beast would probably have to be shot.

Back at the office he said "Look here, Melrose, I want to tell you about something that seems to me pretty damned important. Basically, I mean. Globally, as they say. Affect the future of the human race."

"Listen, old boy," Melrose said, "I agree with every word you say. Talk about the Russians, talk about the United Nations—it's not getting anywhere. Tell you what, I'm up to the eyes in appointments this afternoon, but suppose we discuss the whole thing to-morrow? Don't think I don't think it's all terribly urgent. Still, just take a look at my engagement book."

At a cocktail party later Feathers expected to be shouted down, and was. True, somebody yelled "Listen, Jack's got something momentous to relate,"

and there was a pool of silence, but before Feathers could get going some people arrived whom no one had seen for years, but simply years, and the occasion passed.

Feathers heard a voice beside him saying "But do please tell me what it was you were going to say. It sounded tremendously interesting." Pleasure spouted for an instant in Feathers' pent breast, but on turning to his would-be audience he saw that it was Perry Peers, probably the nastiest man in London. To have given Perry Peers an exclusive pre-view would have hurt Feathers. Also he remembered that to-night was the meeting of the Monday Club at which, once a month, in the private room of a Soho restaurant, a dozen members, with two or three "interesting" guests, met to dine, talk, recount thoughts and experiences of general significance.

An ideal setting for his story. A resemblance to the start of a Buchan novel. "I remember Leithen, the big man at the Treasury, had just finished questioning Sandy about the time he walked barefoot across the North Pole disguised as an Eskimo lay-preacher to fool the Bolshevik brethren, when Feathers said quietly . . ."

The Monday Club meeting was a little like that, for one of the two "interesting" guests was an American lawyer reputed to be the President's closest confidant, and the other was the first Englishman to have spent a year in the heart of "red" Tibet and come out to tell the tale. The difference was that what these two had to say was of such moment that Feathers got no chance to say anything, quietly or otherwise. It was all dollars and Dalai Lamas, and when he did make a small effort to break in with his story—so much more momentous than either of these topics—fellow-members looked at him reproachfully, and were on a conducted tour of the Pentagon or Lhasa before he could say "Hastings."

Frustrated and in a bad temper, but



"I'm in favour of large patriotic families, Elmer—let's say five or six little bachelors of science and the odd little arts student."

with his morning's experience ever more vivid in his mind, he drank rather too much at dinner and went to his club.

"No one in the Club, I suppose?" he said to the porter, forestalling disappointment.

"Oh, yes, sir," said the porter. "Mr. Mitcham's in the smoking-room."

Feathers knew Mitcham only slightly, but when he saw him there all alone, on a semi-circular leather settee in the corner, he hailed him warmly, sat down beside him uninvited, urged him to have a drink. Mitcham looked dazed and fidgety, and Feathers feared he might yet gulp his drink and say he had to get home early.

Blocking this possibility, Feathers plunged straight into his story, telling it fast, but concisely and in full detail. When he glanced now and then at Mitcham sitting beside him he was gratified to see him rubbing the side of his head with the gesture of a thoroughly puzzled man, and his eyes looked intently at Feathers. As Feathers finished, Mitcham said "I'm awfully sorry. I just cannot get my hearing aid to work and I'm afraid I'm very poor at lip-reading. Did you say something about Hastings?"

THE NEW MAYHEW—



—A NOBLEMAN IN REDUCED CIRCUMSTANCES



MORE of these are to be met with now than formerly; and my researches show that their number seems likely to increase. I was unable to arrive at any precise figure, but the man from whom I received the account which follows assured me that he was personally acquainted with two others in comparable circumstances, one being related to the Duke of — and at

present engaged in the underwear trade in a selling capacity.

My informant was a man in his late forties, with recognizably aristocratic features, a stutter, and a fondness for chilled white wine. Despite his straitened circumstances he was at first reluctant to regard himself as a member of the teeming army of London's poor; indeed he conducted himself throughout the interview in a manner so patrician that at last I felt he had done me an honour by arranging for me to pay the bill for our refreshment. Yet the truth is that, burdened with a title, as well as a castle in a remote county, he is hard put to it to make ends meet.

He had, he said, studied the great philosophers and had therefore come to expect very little in this life, and rather less in the next. But he confessed himself bewildered that hard times should befall one who had "always tried to play the g-game." He also acknowledged a sense of fear at having no point of contact with the world of to-day, into which he found himself suddenly tossed. His feeling was strengthened when he found that he could no longer even *purchase* the comfort of servile obedience, congenial companions, or the love of grateful peasants.

Upon my asking what single factor had, in his opinion, contributed most to his downfall, he exclaimed with great vehemence "D-death duties, by G-d!"

His grandfather had died, at a great age, causing a distress among his dependents which was later deepened by their realization that after the requirements of the Inland Revenue Department had

A hundred years ago Henry Mayhew, a former joint-editor of PUNCH, wrote "London Labour and the London Poor." ALEX ATKINSON and RONALD SEARLE make a modern reassessment.

been met the value of the estate was reduced, by about half, to something less than a quarter of a million pounds.

"This was bad enough, in all conscience, and many members of the family began seriously to discuss the possibility of entering commerce. But worse was to follow. A bare twelve months later my poor f-father died in an accident. D-death duties again! The result was, when all was settled up, that there remained l-less than a hundred thousand pounds all told, and little of that in actual m-money!"

To keep the castle staffed and in repair was obviously impossible. Moreover, my informant now found himself obliged to provide for his mother and a number of other relatives, several of whom had, until that time, been merely names to him. "One, I found, had been cheerfully destitute in one of the c-colonies for the better part of half a century!"

The upkeep of the castle soon proving unendurable he moved, with his mother and the less marriageable of his sisters, to a small flat in London, at a monthly rental of eighty pounds. This now constitutes so heavy a drain on his resources that he contemplates the purchase of a terrace house at — Common, where he hopes to set up in business, under an assumed name, as a bookmaker. "Naturally enough," he told me, "I have always l-loved horses."

He can find no buyer for the castle, which is situated in a bleak and inaccessible moor, with cramped, cold rooms and none but the most dubious sanitation. Nor is it suitable for exploitation as a *stately home*: for it has no features, either architectural or historical, likely to interest even the most rabid of sightseers; and to levy a charge of half a crown for the privilege of exploring its draughty estate would be something not far short of sharp practice—to any form of which, up to the present, he has been loath to resort.

"No, we could not have stayed on up there, even using three rooms. Our circle was composed of people of substance: c-company directors, heads of advertising agencies, wholesale g-grocers. They affected not to sneer at our second-hand station-wagon and threadbare hunting-kit; but one soon grows sensitive to slights, however disguised. Also, the villagers themselves had latterly tended to patronize us, and even show us k-kindness. This my mother could not bear; for, as she said, she dreaded the time when they might begin to leave bowls of soup and bundles of cast-off clothing for us on the d-drawbridge at dead of night.

"Yes, my capital is rapidly diminishing. I have had no training in shorthand and typewriting, or the composing of essays for the Sunday newspapers. And yet now I must seek some m-means of supporting myself. No, I cannot believe that I have deserved to reach such straits, since I have lived my life on what I conceive to be Christian principles, so far as they have seemed appropriate. What harm have I done, that I should now be thrown unprepared into an alien way of life, my family possessions daily disappearing, the long and honourable record of my ancestors c-counting for nothing?"

Indeed, this man's position is harsh and unenviable; and yet under prevailing conditions it is not easy to see how it may be alleviated. Moreover, his character appears to have suffered in the process of partial readjustment: where once he was pleased to patronize such arts as came within his ken, he now subscribes to popular Philistinism; where once his charitable works were widespread and anonymous, he will now openly elbow aside a street musician with a curse; and although from the age of sixteen his outlook and inclinations were, as he puts it, "foolishly liberal and enlightened," he now embraces his own personal species of stubbornly reactionary Toryism.

Surely our country, which has always found room for pleasant anachronisms, will not allow such unfortunates to suffer indefinitely? ALEX ATKINSON

Next Week: Literature of the Underprivileged

America Day by Day

P. G. WODEHOUSE reports from New York

IF ever you should happen to want me for anything you can generally find me curled up in my chair with the Statistical Abstract of the United States for whatever year it may be, for I am never happier than when so curled. This is the volume published by the U.S. Census Bureau, and the U.S. Census Bureau is not one of those Census Bureaux which just count people and, when they have counted them, go off and play golf: it counts everything. We thus

learn of the extraordinary way in which the bottom has dropped out of the orphan business in America these last three decades. There were 750,000 orphans in the country in 1920, and everybody who was fond of orphans was feeling fine about it. Judge of their dismay then, on discovering that in 1957 there were only 60,000. No explanation is given of this slump, but it seems pretty obvious that a lot of people are not trying.

We also learn there are 381,000,000 hens in the United States, which means that, allowing three to a garden, there is never a moment in the spring when 127,000,000 householders are not having their seeds scratched up. True, these 381,000,000 hens produce in the course of the year 61,000,000,000 eggs, and we all like an egg with our tea, but in the heat of combat this is forgotten by the devoted men who have courted lumbago tilling their little bit of soil, and it is estimated that between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31 of any given year a total of 381,000,000,000,000 stones, bottles and copies of the *Saturday Evening Post* are thrown at hens which have wandered in from next door and started to take pot luck, missing 364,000,000,000,000 times.

American motorists, the book informs us, travelled 603,000,000,000,000 miles in 1957, but this figure will be smaller in 1958, for Ramon Butler of Los Angeles has had his licence taken away and Samuel Montgomery of New Brunswick, N.J., has become discouraged and is not planning to do much in the driving line for awhile.

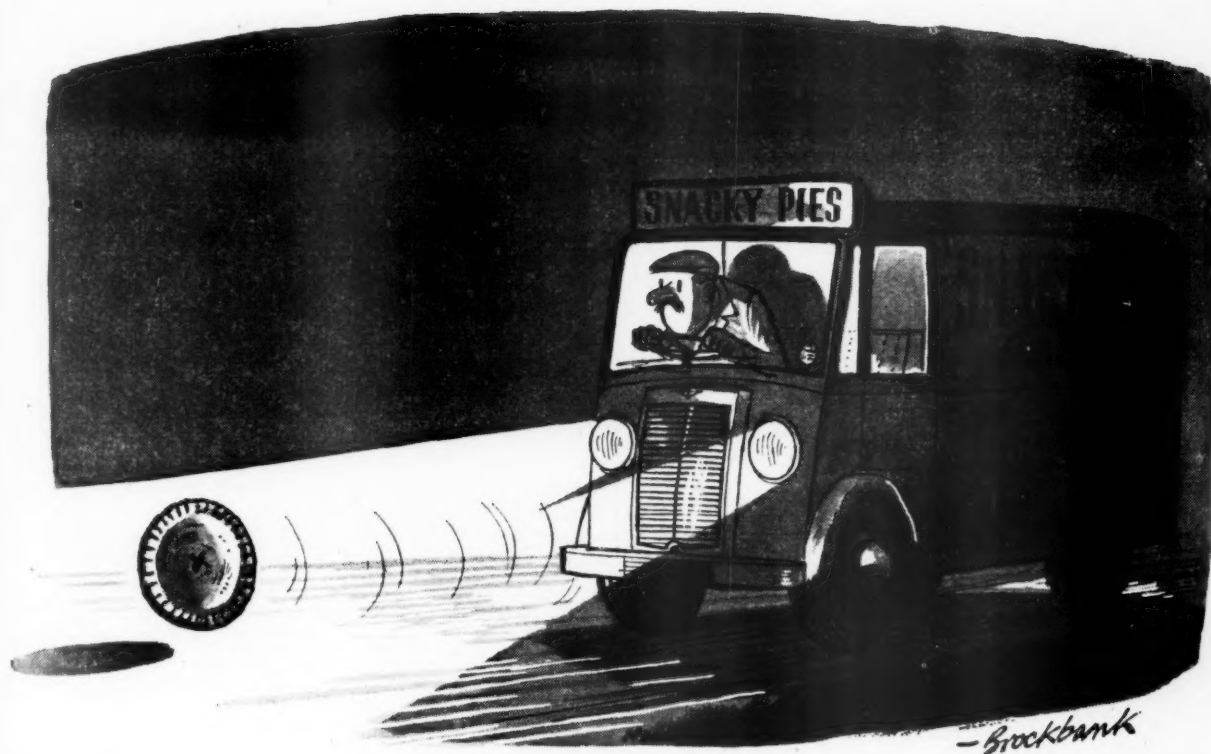
Ramon Butler is the young fellow who was jerked before the tribunal of Judge Thomas D. Griffith the other week, accused of driving ninety-three miles an hour in spite of the tooting of the police cars which were chasing him across California.

"Why didn't you stop?" asked Judge Griffith.

"I couldn't, your honour," said Ramon with a simple candour which became him well. "I didn't have any brakes."

What has depressed Samuel Montgomery is an experience he had with his car one night not long ago. Running out of petrol on Plum Street, New Brunswick, he pulled up, got a tin from the back and started pouring its contents into the tank. It was as he was doing this that he seemed to hear a voice whisper in his ear "Have a care, Samuel, you may be spilling the stuff," so he lit a match and held it down near the place where the petrol goes in, and the next thing he knew he was sitting thirty yards down the street with that odd feeling one gets sometimes that Judgment Day has unexpectedly arrived. He





cannot explain why, he will tell you if you ask him, but the episode has left him with a curious distaste for motoring, and he proposes to stay indoors from now on and catch up with his reading.

The turning worm is always an agreeable spectacle, and anybody who has anything to do with television must have received with three rousing cheers the news that at long last one of these rating concerns is being sued by an indignant broadcasting corporation. The village Hampdens in question are the WLEA people up in Hornell, New York State, their complaint being that the rating agency stated that WWHG, a rival station, was doing twice as much business as WLEA and, when asked how they arrived at these figures, refused to answer except to say that they had "made a survey."

A rating agency's idea of making a survey of the population of the United States is to ring up a thousand citizens and ask them what they are viewing at the moment, so the survey of a town of the size of Hornell was probably one telephone call. "It is thoroughly valid

scientifically," they say, "to project a small sample." Little wonder that John Crosby, the sleepless television watcher of the *New York Herald-Tribune*, calls ratings idiotic and chafes visibly at the thought that they dominate a billion-dollar industry, as they unquestionably do. Sponsors accept them without a question, and a performer who gets a low rating soon finds himself sewn up in a sack and dropped into the local equivalent of the Bosphorus. It makes John Crosby sorer than all get out.

"The normal newspaper procedure," he says, alluding to the suit, "would have been to call the rating firm and say 'You're getting sued. What's your side of the story?,' but, following their system, I didn't have to. I just screamed across the city room to a copy boy 'Who do you suppose is right in this litigation?' 'The other fellow,' he screamed back. Well, it's a small sample, but we have the word of that rating expert that, projecting a small sample, it represents 171,000,000 of you guys."

As the matter is still *sub judice* I can make no comment, except to say that I hope those chiselling hornswogglers—

I use the words in a Pickwickian sense—get soaked for millions and that ere long my taxicab will be splashing them with mud as they beg their bread in the gutter.

I was speaking some time ago of the dance hall on Broadway which announced itself as the

MOST EXCLUSIVE PLACE IN TOWN
EVERYBODY WELCOME

There is now a sign on their door:

CLEAN AND DECENT DANCING
EVERY NIGHT EXCEPT SUNDAY

Obviously, the wilder element are telling one another, that is the night to catch them.

2 2

"Ian Carmichael has a look of permanent bewilderment etched upon his face... What he has to be bewildered about I am not sure... He has money in the bank; a Mercedes-Benz; a house in Hampstead, and a fat contract. And abroad he is the best-known British comedy actor since Alec Guinness..."—*Sunday Express*

There's five reasons?

THE BRITISH CHARACTER—TWENTY YEARS ON

Admirers of PONT who remember how, in *PUNCH* during the nineteen-thirties, he transfixed the British character on the point of his pen and subjected it to merciless examination sometimes write wistfully asking how his comments would fit the British character of the post-war world. The answer is, they seem to fit as neatly as ever; the only thing is that in some cases they need a slight readjustment in interpretation. To demonstrate this, we propose to reprint some of the classic PONT drawings week by week with a short commentary to bring them up to date. Here are the first two.



Political Apathy.

THE drawing above first appeared in *Punch* in April 1937.

Plus ça change . . . The gentleman on the left, who has been representing a safe Conservative constituency in Parliament for longer than seems possible,

is still unable to strike any answering spark from his companion. With that calm assurance that Conservative Members of Parliament manage so convincingly he has told him, "as simply as he knows how," about the Rent Act, and

the European Common Market, and the credit squeeze, and the U.S. rocket sites, and the recent changes in the Cabinet; but the silly chap seems to take no interest in anything more important than the batting order of the English eleven in the forthcoming series of Tests with New Zealand.



Tendency to be embarrassed by foreign currencies.

The drawing below first appeared in October 1936. With the possible exception of the ladies' hats it is as current now as it was then.

The two ladies set off on their tour of the châteaux of the Loire in the firm belief that a hundred pounds' worth of francs between them would see them through. After a fortnight of the most expensive living in Europe they find themselves on the train on their last lap with no French money at all to tip the porter with. They have offered him one of the English pound notes they have been saving for the fare home from Victoria, knowing quite well that this is against the law, but cannot quite bring themselves to accept his rate of exchange of five hundred francs to the pound (which of course involves his keeping all of it and leaving them more or less penniless for the rest of the journey).

And I am Ready to Depart

By R. G. G. PRICE

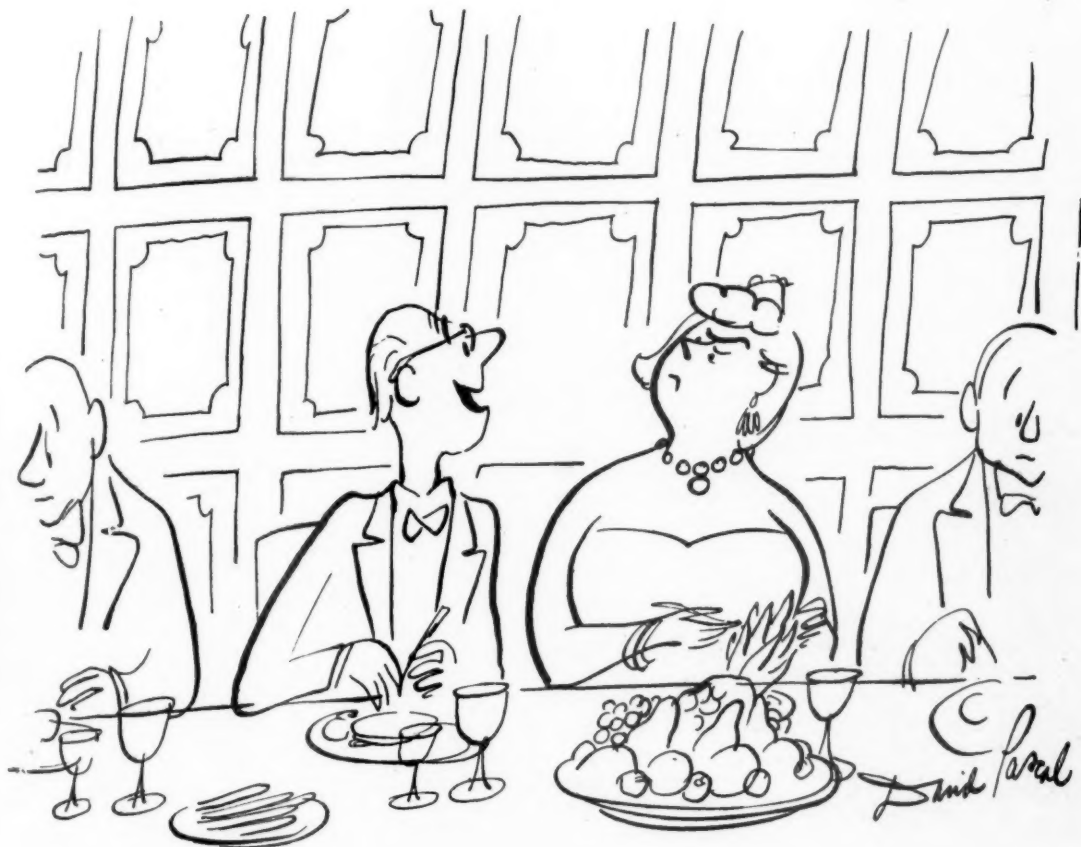
SUDDENLY there comes a point when the politician looks at the firm, deferential faces round his desk and the hungry faces round the Cabinet table and wants to get away from it all; but politics is the art of getting pressed into doing what you want. The politician therefore resigns upon a public issue, preferably one that will leave him high and dry when the future engulfs his late colleagues. One can imagine one of those small, inner voices that are so helpful to statesmen murmuring to Mr. Thorneycroft "First some pantomimes and then, perhaps, winter sports. You will be rested and Rab will be tired when the succession becomes vacant."

Resignation gave Sir Anthony Eden and Mr. Aneurin Bevan and Mr. Harold Wilson a well-timed boost up their

When a Politician Resigns

Party ladder; but it does not always work. Lord Conesford, ten years after he resigned his Parliamentary Secretaryship, was still only a Parliamentary Secretary. Perhaps it was the penalty for premature anti-Stalinism. On the other hand, Sir Stafford Cripps, who might well have been Prime Minister if he had lived, not only resigned from the War Cabinet but was actually expelled from the Labour Party. Lord Salisbury resigned once from the Chamberlain Government and has resigned once, so far, from the Macmillan Government. The chief effect of this has been to implant firmly in the minds of newspaper readers that his nickname is "Bobbity." Obviously the follow-up is all-important.

The great thing about resignations is that they jerk the public attention back to politics, which makes them a valuable part of British political life. Until the doctrine of the Collective Responsibility of the Cabinet evolved, resigning did not have much to it. Instead of tottering the Ministry would simply say "Oh, has Fred gone?" and carry on feuding among themselves. When the doctrine began to crystallize, all sorts of people, like Palmerston and Huskisson, resigned, but generally, owing to confusion during the realignment of Parties, because of finding themselves in the wrong Cabinet rather than the Cabinet in the wrong. The modern period perhaps began with an odd resignation of Gladstone's. When he left the Government over the grant to Maynooth he suggested that the Prime



"Did you know armadillos always have litters of four, of which two are identical twins of the same sex?"

Minister should make him Ambassador to Florence. The point seemed to contemporaries a small one; someone, described in Morley's *Life* as "a journalistic wag," compared him to a lady's footman jumping off a Great Western train at forty miles an hour merely to pick up his hat.

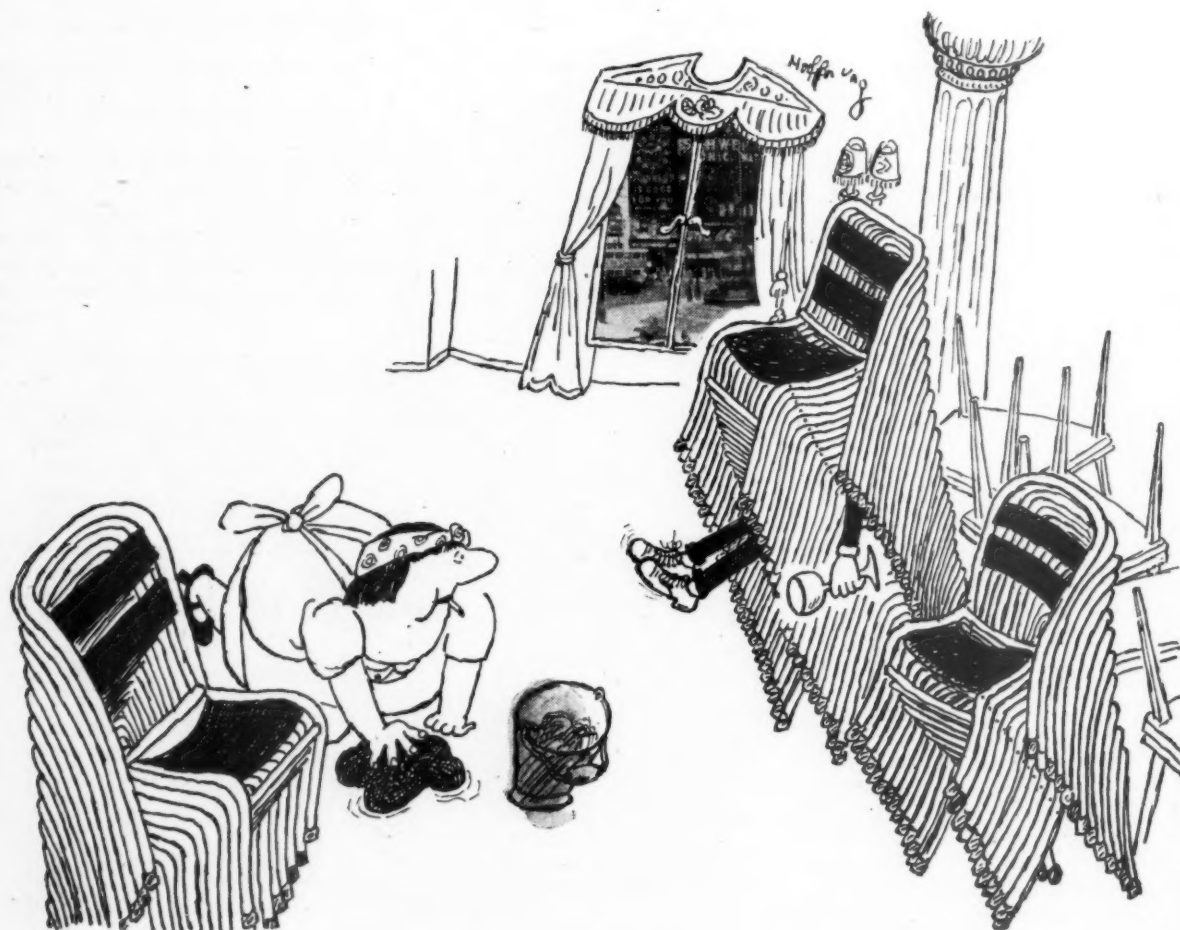
There are certain tests for a resignation to become classical. (a) It must be due to disagreement over policy, not to ill-health, misfortune or dishonesty. (b) It must not be a disguised sacking, like the kind of resignation where the Minister's letter explains that he simply *must* give more time to his family business. (c) It must shake the Government, however slightly.

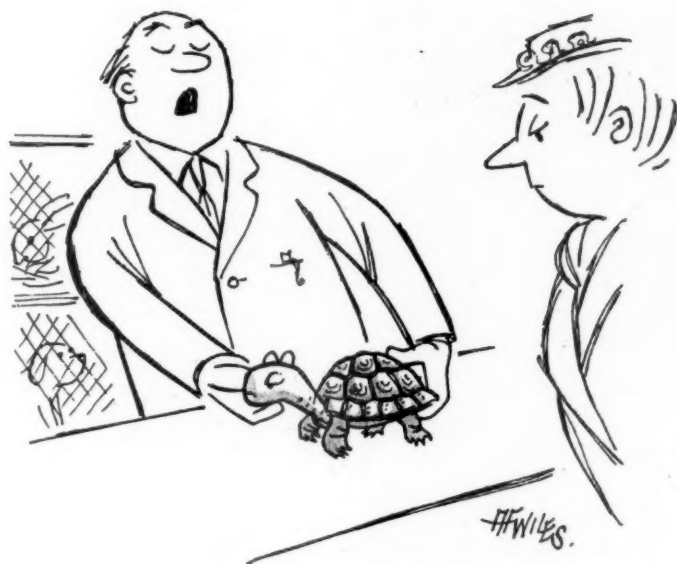
There are resignations that fulfil these

conditions yet have not stuck in the public memory. The resignations of Morley and Burns from the Cabinet on war with Germany in 1914, John Simon's resignation on Conscription, Austen Chamberlain's quixotic resignation from the India Office because he was technically responsible for the breakdown of the Indian Army medical services on the Mesopotamian front, the resignation of Sir Charles Trevelyan from the second Labour Government on the ground that it was not a Labour Government, and the gradual withdrawal of the Samuelite Liberals from the National Government over the Ottawa Agreements have never sunk into political folklore. Gladstone's has.

Cranborne's resignation over the

Disraeli Reform Bill in 1867 has retained interest because he was a future Prime Minister. *Punch* oddly remarked of his speech in the House: "He spoke in an earnest and manly fashion, as English gentlemen always do when they are talking only of personal matters." The year 1886 was a good one for resignations. First Joseph Chamberlain resigned over Irish Home Rule and then Lord Randolph Churchill over Defence Estimates. It is comparatively rarely that two possible Prime Ministers who are fathers of Prime Ministers resign in the same year. *Punch* referred approvingly to Lord Randolph as "a comical elf." In the debate that followed his resignation the Government spokesman





"Notice the way he carries his head . . . his fine markings . . . the set of his limbs."

said "The noble lord has not the shadow of a leg to stand upon." In 1903 Chamberlain resigned once more, though from a different Party. *Punch*, which had been rather casual about his previous resignation, now compared him to Lady Macbeth, a ventriloquist, Morgiana and a cow-puncher.

The resignation of Sir Samuel Hoare over the Hoare-Laval Pact is remembered because of the inarticulate feeling it produced that it ought to have been the Cabinet who resigned. The resignation of his successor, Sir Anthony Eden, who neatly shifted from the sinking Chamberlain wing of the Party to the rising Churchill wing, got much more sustained publicity and was still folklore long after the Duff Cooper resignation over Munich had been forgotten (helped into oblivion, perhaps, by his curious tenure of the Ministry of Information which included reciting Macaulay's *Armada* after the 9 o'clock news). The resignations of Mr. Aneurin Bevan and Mr. Harold Wilson seem to have converted them from solid Minister of Labour and President of the Board of Trade to shadow Foreign Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer; nor is the Premiership out of the question. Mr. Macmillan has not, as far as I remember, ever resigned from a Govern-

ment; but he once refused the Conservative whip. Sir Winston Churchill has, I think, managed only one resignation, during the First World War; but his absence from the Cabinet in the 'thirties was, in a way, a kind of anticipatory resignation.

Of the many stories that hang around the departure of the eminent from their eminences my favourite is legal. Lloyd George wanted the Lord Chief Justice's post for Gordon Hewart, and his announcement that Lord Trevethin was vacating it was thought to be impolitely prompt. When the Bar gathered in Court to welcome the new L.C.J. the Attorney-General expressed the hope that Lord Hewart would display the wisdom of Mansfield and the learning of Blackstone and the acumen of Coke, etc. Theobald Matthew added in a penetrating whisper, "And the resignation of Lord Trevethin."

Music Master

(Sir John Barbirolli is to be offered the *Freedom of Manchester*)

INSCRIBE him in memory's pages,
A tithe of our debt repay:
What London has thought for ages
Manchester thinks to-day.

J. B. B.

LETTER

To the Editor of *Punch*

SIR,—One thing that the Saunders-Roe affair in the Isle of Wight has made clear is that the Government does not really understand the function of an aircraft industry in a modern democratic state.

The days when aeroplane factories were established with no other object than to supply aeroplanes to the Services and the air-lines are past. The case has been well stated in a letter to *The Times* from Councillor Mark, the Chairman of the Cowes Urban District Council. "If the present crisis is to be dealt with on a realistic basis," he writes, "to prevent unemployment and hardship, then it does seem that there can be only one course and that is to continue the development of the S.R. 177."

This, sir, is right in the spirit of the age. The point is not that the S.R. 177, excellent as it is, does not fulfil a felt want in the aeroplane world; the point is that building it will prevent hardship and unemployment in Cowes.

Of course there is bound to be opposition in diehard circles. No doubt as soon as Saunders-Roe get the S.R. 177s rolling off the production-lines, parking them on the grass outside the factory until they can get somebody to take them away, somebody will jump up in the House of Commons and demand what they are all for and whether they are not a great waste of public money. This is a completely reactionary view. The aeroplanes have got to be built, unless the Government is prepared to face the threat of redundancy in the factory, and it is not very realistic to complain simply because they are piling up at Cowes instead of being flown up and down by the Luftwaffe. It would, in fact, be more truly realistic to turn factories over to building unwanted aircraft wherever redundancy is threatened.

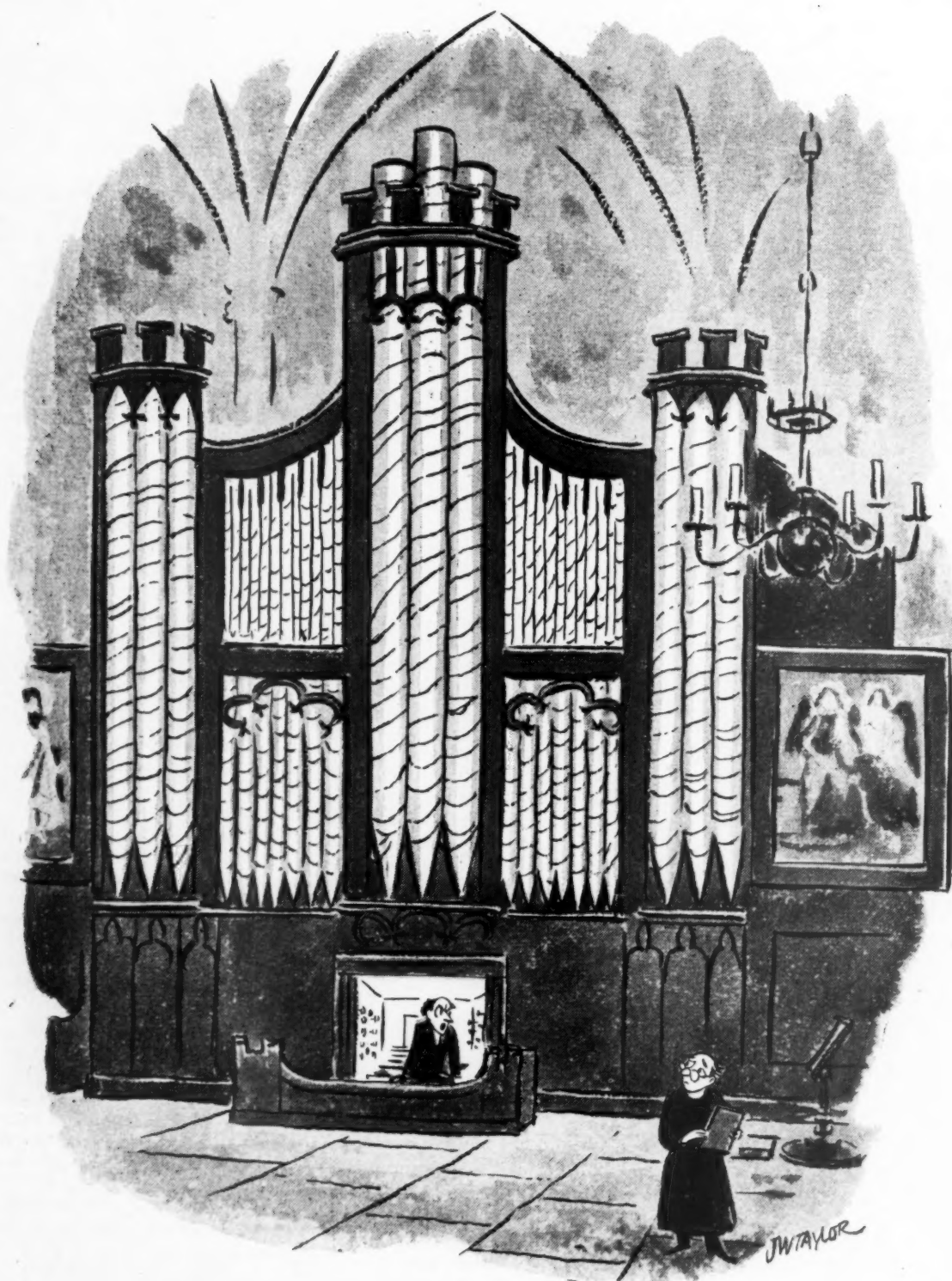
Possibly the ideal solution would be to declare war on somebody, when we would be glad to get aeroplanes from anywhere and everyone in Cowes would be working overtime. That would be realistic enough for anybody, though rather miserable for the Isle of Wight in the long run.

I have the honour to be, sir,

Your obedient servant,

London, S.W.

G. F. McENTEE



"What zealot, may I ask, lagged my pipes?"



In the City

Mr. Tube's Defence

AFTER being butted down a mountain slope by an angry goat recently that pacific hot-gospeller, Billy Graham, remarked to a questioning and solicitous journalist that all he had been able to do in self-defence was "to turn the other cheek." Mr. Graham had no option in the matter—or rather it was what the Stock Exchange calls "a one-way option." There are two ways about a great debate which is now gripping the City on a highly practical manifestation of pacifism: whether or not the steel industry should defend itself against the threat of being renationalized if and when Labour is returned to power.

Some steel chairmen believe in fighting, and very appropriately the battle has been opened by Mr. A. G. Stewart, the Chairman and Managing Director of the great tube manufacturers, Stewarts and Lloyds. He has said that the alarm should be sounded before it is too late; that the industry is tired of being treated like a shuttlecock; that an immediate result of the threat of nationalization is that capital for further expansion becomes more difficult to raise. And so Mr. Stewart at the next meeting of the company is to ask shareholders' approval for a campaign of defence and enlightenment to counter nationalization. In fact "Mister Tube" will follow the trail so successfully blazed by "Mister Cube." Other steel masters are lining up with Mr. Stewart. Mr. Harald Peake of the Steel Company of Wales has appealed for a five to seven year nationalization truce in the steel industry. Sir Walter Jones of the United Steel Companies has also gone into battle declaring opposition to any further interference with the ownership or management of the industry.

There is no complete unanimity in the industry on the wisdom of waging such a campaign. In part the doubts are of philosophic character. Is an industry justified in using its shareholders' money to fight a decision which, if it is taken, will presumably reflect the will of the

majority? How consonant with democracy is this procedure, especially as some of the shareholders (though no doubt a minority) are Socialists? In the case of "Mister Cube" the campaign, a brilliant and successful combination of wit and wisdom, was waged by Tate and Lyle, which is still at heart a family business. These philosophic doubts can be set at rest. An industry is obviously well within its rights in enlightening public opinion and in moulding the views which it is hoped will produce the right answer in 1959 or 1960. This is in keeping with the normal processes of democracy.

The philosophy of the campaign may be right—but what about the tactics? It is evident that the fervour to nationalize has lost a great deal of its allure in Labour ranks. Some people in the industry argue that a challenge to battle by the steelmasters will merely rekindle embers which, left alone, would soon have died out.

Be that as it may, the need for a



On the Ice

Curling

TO explain Curling as "Bowls on ice" is rather like explaining baseball as glorified rounders. That is to say it seems a reasonable simplification but it's not worth saying in the presence of an enthusiast, even if the rules are similar enough for someone who has never seen the game before to understand what is going on. The main differences between bowls and curling are that instead of a jack there is a "tee" which is the centre of a series of concentric circles on the ice, and that members of a team are allowed to affect the progress of one of their stones along the ice by sweeping a path in front of it to make it travel farther.

But the bowls-gaffe is nothing like as bad as any suggestion that curling is only an interesting survival, like cheese-rolling or bottle-kicking. For one thing the game is becoming international; it is true that the Royal Caledonian

decision one way or the other is self-evident. Uncertainty about the future of the industry is causing it grave financial damage. Mr. Strauss's earlier vindictive threats to renationalize as soon as the Labour Party gets the chance and not to pay a penny more than it did the previous time were just wind and bluster. They have since been supplanted by the much more reasonable terms of the Labour Party's "Industry and Society" pamphlet. But the echoes of the threat have depressed the prices of steel shares and made it hard to raise new capital on reasonable terms.

The industry has every right to defend itself against a threat which it regards as an attack on the interests of its workers as well as those of its shareholders. If the campaign is criticized, let the critics recall the *méchanceté* of that animal which defends itself when it is attacked. If the campaign comes off, steel shares at their present prices would be about the cheapest securities on the stock markets.

Slicker

Curling Club divides Great Britain into thirty-five areas, those in the South West area ending "... Renfrew, Wigtown, England," but there are several healthy clubs in English cities, only about half of whose members are Scots.

Another healthy symptom is the preparedness of curlers to accept changes in the game; the discovery that it is possible to make a stone follow a curved path by rotating it about its vertical axis at the moment of delivery is only a hundred and fifty years old, and the development of indoor rinks (which means that the season now goes on from September to April instead of being just a meteorological phenomenon) is much more recent than that. And it is not five years since curling solved its "drag" problem with less fuss and greater efficiency than cricket looks like doing. A certain amount of slide at the moment of delivery had always been countenanced, but when a Canadian slid the whole length of the rink and put his stone down on the tee, the amount of permissible slide was quietly but firmly legislated for.

Indoor ice is fast, but outdoor ice allows a greater curve to be put on the path of the stone; Swiss ice has both advantages. So anyone who is looking for a sport which not only has a noble history behind it but also provides an excuse for going to Kitzbühl when one is past skiing might, as a start, stop thinking of curling as "only bowls on ice."

PETER DICKINSON



BOOKING OFFICE The Tender Passion

Love. Stendhal. Translated by Gilbert and Suzanne Sale. Merlin Press, 21/-

STENDHAL'S *De l'Amour* is not, on the whole, one of his most popular books, either among his fans or in that much wider circle where he is merely read as a famous French author. All the same it contains a mass of good things. It was first published in 1822 when he had just returned to Paris after his years in Italy, where he had fallen in love with Mélite Viscontini. This love was not returned, and Stendhal, then thirty-nine, wrote the book—or rather collected together these impressions and reflections on all kind of subjects—in a mood of considerable dejection. This edition is a great improvement on the English translation which appeared about forty or fifty years ago.

Stendhal himself is so strange and contradictory a figure that it is hard to make any simple statement about his gifts; but he has some claim to be considered the first writer to apply what are now called "psychological" methods. Although he regarded himself as a "romantic"—and certainly much of his approach to life was of a romantic kind—he also tried to write down how people actually behaved, and not some conventional picture of stylized human conduct as employed in the novels of his time. He is particularly interesting on the subject of love, because he thoroughly appreciated both the tender and the ruthless aspects of that passion. He was on the side of the Man of Feeling against the Don Juan; but he realized that the Don Juan scored up most of the points on the board, even if those points were not always wholly valid ones.

"Possession is nothing," he writes, "only enjoyment matters"; and later, "A woman's power lies only in the degree of unhappiness with which she can punish her lover."

His comments must of course be read against the background of the

society in which he was accustomed to move: soldiers, bureaucrats, adventurers, meeting together in not outstandingly smart salons; Europe convulsed by the Napoleonic upheaval; France defeated, under a government coloured by unenlightened clericalism. It was a watershed, political, moral, even emotional.



"Let us remember that *beauty* is the visible expression of character, of the moral make-up of a person; it has nothing to do with passion. Now *passion* is what we must have, and beauty can only suggest *probabilities* about a woman and about her self-possession. But the eyes of your pock-marked mistress are a wonderful reality which makes nonsense of all possible probabilities."

That is one side of the picture, certainly, but a few chapters later we are given yet another angle on this inexhaustible subject: "That charming fellow Donézan said yesterday: 'In my young days, and indeed until quite late in my life (for I was fifty in '89), women used to powder their hair. I confess to you that a woman without powder is repugnant to me and always gives the impression of being a chamber-

maid who has not had time to finish her toilet.'"

To this last remark Stendhal adds a most typically Stendhalian—and infinitely shrewd—comment: "This is the only argument against Shakespeare and in favour of the unities."

On the subject of Modesty he writes: "A woman in Madagascar thinks nothing of showing what is most carefully hidden here, but would die of shame rather than exhibit an arm." He adds a note to his chapter on Jealousy: "An academy should be established in Philadelphia for the exclusive purpose of gathering material for the study of man in the state of nature. This should be done now, before these strange tribes become extinct."

Where Stendhal shows less than his usual grasp is in a lack of understanding of the fundamental nature of much of the material with which he deals. Nineteenth-century optimism infected even his sceptical view of human nature. "Nothing will be so beautiful, just or happy as the moral atmosphere of France in about 1900." He believed that a more liberal attitude towards marriage would put everything right; so much so that he even suggests (perhaps not very seriously) that a woman who had freely chosen a husband, and then committed adultery, should be sent to prison for life.

Stendhal's *Love* can be opened on any page and read with pleasure. There is always something unexpected. "The more a man has the gifts of a great artist, the more he should aspire to titles and decorations as a protective rampart against the world." How different from what is usually said on that subject. It must have been enjoyable to have gone to get a passport from him when he was French consul at Civitavecchia—enjoyable, that is, provided one had been tipped off that he was a man of letters, and it was not one of those innumerable occasions when he had slipped away on leave without meticulously reporting the matter.

ANTHONY POWELL

Voss. Patrick White. *Eyre and Spottiswoode*, 16/-

Mr. White's earlier novel *The Tree of Man* owed so much to D. H. Lawrence that it read at times like pastiche. His new and widely acclaimed work, *Voss*, shows a remarkable advance. Its poetical and spiritual qualities produce a flavour that we shall in future recognize as peculiarly this author's own.

Mr. White is not an original writer but he is an exceptionally powerful one. *Voss* gives us the old romantic story of a man turning his back on society to find fulfilment in untamed nature. Nature, in the shape of the Australian desert which Voss and his followers start out in 1845 to cross for the first time, is given little showing here. The discomforts of the journey are acutely conveyed; its background remains vague. The author's intention undoubtedly is the exploration of the explorer Voss and it is a measure of his power that he can involve us in a character whose egoism, vanity and nagging cruelty are so often hateful to us. Mr. White has been likened to Tolstoy but I doubt whether Tolstoy would have approved his many affectations of style. His new novel is an impressive book but whether it is a great one only time can reveal.

O. M.

Lord Grimthorpe, 1816-1905. Peter Ferriday. *John Murray*, 21/-

Except as an able lawyer and a gifted inventor of clocks and locks—among his devices was one which jammed a lavatory door until the cistern had flushed—Edmund Beckett Denison was a dangerous amateur. A man of great drive and little taste, unscrupulous in controversy, he has left us mainly the Westminster clock, Big Ben and the bungled restoration of St. Alban's cathedral in the dubious circumstances of a bought faculty. He fought for the deceased wife's sister, wrote endlessly to *The Times* in an extremely lively style, and, although the Chancellor of York, was a constant pain in the neck of the episcopacy.

Mr. Ferriday tells us little more of the man himself than that he was a punctilious Sabbatarian, who left two million pounds after living on boiled beef and fruit tart. The book does not aim at biography but at a record of Victorian battle and scandal. Much of it is entertaining, but its cynically jocular approach to privilege puts its objectivity somewhat in doubt.

E. O. D. K.

Portugal. Roy Campbell. *Max Reinhardt*, 21/-

This posthumously published work of Roy Campbell has all the characteristic marks of his style—a good deal of irrelevance, a good deal of somewhat adolescent boasting about his physical feats, and a good deal of abuse of any who are made in a different mould from his. There are those know-all *aides* that are so often as inaccurate as they are

irrelevant ("Prince William Rospigliosi, now orange-farming himself in Southern Rhodesia"). There are a few sentences of somewhat repellent brutality ("Made short work of them with cold steel . . . I had hardly finished cleaning my bayonet on the grass"), but when Roy Campbell writes of what he loves—horses or poetry—he writes well. It is in his chapters on Portuguese poetry and Portuguese prose that he has taken most pains to keep to the point. Where he is not interested in a subject he leaves it out. You would get no hint from this book that there is any architecture in Portugal. One could hardly guess that this book and that of Mr. Sacheverell Sitwell were about the same country.

C. H.



AT THE GALLERY

The Age of Louis XIV
(ROYAL ACADEMY)

A NEW and effective note has recently been struck among the photographs of ladies' undies lining the walls of London's Underground moving staircases. It is the introduction of a coloured reproduction of a sober painting by Georges de La Tour advertising the present R.A. show (which closes on March 9). As an old master, La Tour is a newcomer. Born in 1593 (died 1652), his star began to rise during World War I, and continued to do so with an acknowledged oeuvre of still only fifteen works. As nine of these are now at the R.A. I may be forgiven for stressing the interest in this individual artist. A skilled technician whose early work has been sometimes mistaken for that of Velasquez or Murillo, La Tour came under the spell of figures seen in candle-light. Such is the magic of La Tour that we too become quickly intrigued by the quite simple effects of light and shade registered, and relieved and rested by an unusual sense of peace and stillness engendered in these nocturnal scenes. When so much is offered we can readily excuse a certain woodenness in the drawing of some of his figures, particularly when they are sunk in shadow. Nothing could be further from the life of the court and Versailles than the world conjured up by La Tour, whose spiritual home was the north, and who passed his life in Lorraine.

Other paintings which will appeal to the ever-growing ranks of the intelligentsia are by the brothers Le Nain, highly skilled realistic painters, while there are also paintings and drawings by Poussin and Claude. The show, however, is by no means dominated by paintings, and both the large gallery No. 3 and two other rooms are almost entirely hung with tapestries which make both an admirable introduction and background to the large bust of the formidable Louis XIV himself in the centre hall by Coysevox. By a coincidence a portrait of another formidable monarch has lately come to



London—namely Holbein's cartoon of Henry VIII, formerly at Chatsworth and now at the National Portrait Gallery.

NOTE.—In addition the new Rembrandt at the National Gallery (from Chatsworth), English Water-colours at Agnew's, and a contemporary show of great variety at the Leicester Galleries should fill to repletion the most ardent art lover.

ADRIAN DAINTRY



AT THE BALLET

The Burrow (COVENT GARDEN)

THE burrow which gives the title to Kenneth Macmillan's new and unexpectedly melodramatic ballet is a hiding place under a sloping attic roof. Its only window is screened and its only door is a magnet of morbid fascination.

A heterogeneous group of fear-ridden people occupy a squalid room lit by a single naked electric bulb which, when it flickers, freezes the group into momentary agony of suspense. The setting and the drama of hunted humanity in hiding may well have been inspired by *The Diary of Anne Frank*, for they create a similar atmosphere of brooding fatality. But as this is a silent drama enacted in terms of the dance it raises again the question of the fitness of the medium for any contribution of lasting worth to ballet. *The Burrow* is, alas! inescapably topical, but in its artistic existence it seems bound to be ephemeral.

A few of the dancers emerge as well-defined *dramatis personæ*. Anne Heaton,

for instance, as a woman distraught to the verge of hysteria; Donald Britton as a cheerful ass who assumes a mission to keep the party's spirits up by his fooling; Lynn Seymour and Donald Macleary as a pair of adolescent lovers for whom there is no quiet corner in the wretched attic; and Noreen Sopwith as a child with a skipping-rope only half aware of the emotions she cannot wholly share.

Mr. Macmillan's choreography provides the characters with movements which are often eloquent enough to conjure up the mood and communicate the idea of tension, but there is little which is memorable as dance and there is nothing which develops the opening situation. By using existing music by Frank Martin, which up to a point is fitting enough, Mr. Macmillan seems to me to have handicapped himself. A tense, dramatic ballet such as *The Burrow* cries out for its own musical setting composed in close collaboration with the choreographer. It does not find inspiration in the score and it does not interpret it. As a result the moment on which the curtain falls—the dreaded hollow knocking on the door—was almost emptied of tragedy by the unawareness, as it were, of the music.

The piece was warmly received and is certainly the most arresting and original of the three new works which the junior company of the Royal Ballet has given us in its all-too-short London season. As it now resumes its provincial touring, after

filling Covent Garden at every performance, the young company may well feel that it has made good its title to be completely assimilated with the rest of Royal Ballet.

Anne Heaton, its leading member, has shown herself outstanding in *Giselle* (excelling, which is rare, as the pathetic wraith of the village girl in the second part) and in the principal role in *Sylphides*. A revival of Andrée Howard's *Veneziana* left little if anything to prefer in its performance by the original company. Margaret Lee, in particular, achieved distinction in the grand manner in Violetta Elvin's part of *La Favorita*.

C. B. MORTLOCK

AT THE PLAY

Lysistrata
(ROYAL COURT)



WHAT with *The Rape of the Belt*, and now *Lysistrata*, men and their vanities are taking a sad drubbing in the London theatre. Little women and good wives, who can't be expected to understand the solemn mysteries of war and politics, are definitely two up; and all the more joyfully because it is to the cunning deployment of femininity and not to the melancholy excesses of feminism that this score is owed.

Written nearly twenty-four centuries ago, when here we were still clubbing mugwumps in the swamps of Pimlico, *Lysistrata* is a brilliant comedy that

makes a very important and healthy assertion. It cuts ruthlessly through the cocoon of words in which we wrap our hypocrisies to point out that in spite of all his splendid pretensions man is nevertheless an animal, and that few animals are prepared to sacrifice the simple comforts of love for anything on earth, not even for power and glory. Faced with a shrewdly-organized bedroom lock-out by their women, the soldiers of Athens and Sparta collapse miserably, forgetting their cherished squabbles in a common hunger.

For its bawdry *Lysistrata* is denied even to the erudite reconnaissance of the Classical Sixths. Certainly I have seen nothing franker on the stage, and one scene makes mincemeat of the whole position of the Lord Chamberlain, by whom I take it Aristophanes is reluctantly hallowed as a classic. This translation, by Dudley Fitts, is pretty true to the original and dodges none of the issues. But although parish outings might do well to avoid the Royal Court, distinctions must be drawn; all the difference in the world lies between the grubby little commercial comedy, whose sole point is its smut, and a play using an outrageous theme to arrive at a valid philosophical conclusion. Without being verbally very witty (at least in this translation), much of *Lysistrata* is riotously funny. It is civilized and timeless as well, and inspired by a sanity which we can envy.

This production comes in from Frank Hauser's lively theatre at Oxford, with almost everything in its favour, including sympathetic direction and decoration by two able Greeks. With many unobtrusive touches Minos Volanakis adds to the force of the comedy. He brings a light note almost of modern revue satire to the traditional chorus, and employs Thomas Eastwood's near-Greek music discreetly. If it be his fault that *Lysistrata* has to wait for her accent until the third syllable, which sounds appallingly clumsy, that is my only complaint. The gay three-tiered set by Nicholas Georgiadis holds its attraction all through the evening, and his dresses are immensely becoming.

The recruiting of the women under *Lysistrata*'s cool leadership, the capture of the Acropolis and the first repulse of the men fill up the first half amusingly enough; but it is the second, with its discovery of blackleg women, its feline teasing of a desperate husband and the mounting indignity of the men, that gives us Aristophanes at full bore. Joan Greenwood's slightly mocking drawl sits *Lysistrata* well, and the brains and the nerve are there; in the matter of horsepower she fails a little only in her big speech of ultimatum. Patricia Burke, Patricia Marmont and Natasha Parry are lieutenants to reckon with, and George Benson as the fuming magistrate and Gary Raymond as the thwarted husband are the right men for the job. But one



Lysistrata—JOAN GREENWOOD

[*Lysistrata*]

of the joys of this production is that the individual reactions of a large cast appear to have been worked out with care.

Recommended

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

Several exciting newcomers have suddenly jabbed the London theatre into fresh life. The Old Vic ignores the calendar successfully with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (8/1/58). *The Happy Man* (Westminster—25/12/57), *The Rape of the Belt* (Piccadilly—18/12/57), and *Dinner With the Family* (New—9/10/57) are three comedies of distinction, the last an Anouilh with a dash of bitters. ERIC KEOWN



AT THE PICTURES

Davy—*Baby Face Nelson*

IF the assumption is justified that show-business people are often like that in private life too, stories about them can hardly be blamed for their tendency towards sentimentality and over-emphasis. These are the faults of *Davy* (Director: Michael Relph), which otherwise has a great deal of good in it.

The story is quite simple and sentimental in outline. Davy (Harry Secombe) is a member, and the most important member, of a slapstick variety act, but he has a splendid natural singing voice, good enough to get him an audition at Covent Garden. The film opens at the London music-hall where the act is performing, and shows how important his performance is as a part of it and how important he as a person is in holding it together. Things are beginning to go well for the act, and they see prospects of a certain fame; and when the other members of it hear about Davy's audition they are dismayed and angered by the thought that he may be in a position to leave them and go on to success by himself. Even the possibility of his leaving is enough to make the act begin to fall apart. He has his audition, he is immensely tempted when it proves to be a success... but family affection and sympathy for the others make him give up his great chance.

Yes, a simple sentimental story; but the detail is good and well done, even though it is the sort of detail we have seen before, and though the characters are pretty obvious types without any depth they are skilfully presented. This exact script, with hardly an alteration, might have been used for a film twenty years ago; but I suggest that, made in the terms of twenty years ago, it would now seem insufferable, whereas made in the terms of to-day, with the subtle differences in style of performance and presentation of scene (all the things that build up into "atmosphere") that we have gradually, unconsciously grown used to since then, it is quite worth seeing. There is sentimental over-emphasis: at the end, the rubbing-in of the point by Davy's earnest answers to



Davy—HARRY SECOMBE

[Davy]

an interminable series of innocent questions from his small nephew. There is formula stuff: the tired old situation that provides a young friendly girl for the hero to meet and make friends with as both wait for some ordeal. But Mr. Secombe's simple, warm-hearted portrait of Davy, certain other acting sketches (including Alexander Knox's of a Beechamesque conductor), and well-observed, entertaining detail (the Covent Garden barmaids casually joining in what they can hear of the opera rehearsal)—these are enough to carry it.

Baby Face Nelson (Director: Don Siegel) is rather an odd work. A stern off-screen voice at the beginning announces it as the "re-creation of an era"; it is, in fact, a period piece about the gangsters of the early nineteen-thirties, and particularly that one of them known as Baby Face Nelson, chief representative of a type the voice describes acidly as "trigger-happy punks." We see him as he develops into one of these, wildly using his "chopper" or sub-machine-gun on the slightest provocation, ready to kill a man for not stepping out of his way; but the piece is in effect almost a clinical study, for a character with this dominating trait must occupy the same sort of place in a story about human beings as a convulsion of nature. One's sympathies are not engaged by any of the people here, only one's curiosity and interest in whatever outrageous thing is going to happen next.

As a quite cold story of violence and action, then, the film is well, grimly, harshly told, with touches of bitter

humour, in a style that recalls some of the powerful gangster films made in its period. Mickey Rooney is properly intimidating as the little scoundrel himself. His girl (Carolyn Jones), almost the only woman in the large cast, is for most of the picture called on to do little but unquestioningly help him to bash people and to drive his getaway car; but at last, at his request, she dutifully bumps him off.

Survey

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

In London: the Indian *Pathar Panchali* (1/1/58) is outstanding. (This week an earlier Indian one called *Munna* was press-shown, and some critics have inexplicably found it equally impressive; to me it seemed in comparison almost juvenile, stuffed with the conventions of thirty years ago, and—apart from one or two moments of interesting detail—as boring as anything I ever saw in my life.) *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (16/10/57) has come back, with American laurels. The excellent colour musical *The Pajama Game* (18/12/57), the good unconventional spy story *Count Five and Die* (8/1/58), the enjoyable farce *Blue Murder at St. Trinian's* (1/1/58), and *Around the World in Eighty Days* (17/7/57) continue.

Releases include a good handsome thriller, *Stopover Tokyo* (11/12/57); a well-done piece about motor-racing, *The Devil's Hairpin* (8/1/58); and the indescribable *The Story of Mankind* (4/12/57), which has two or three intentionally comic scenes among a great deal of nominally serious stuff which is just as funny. RICHARD MALLETT

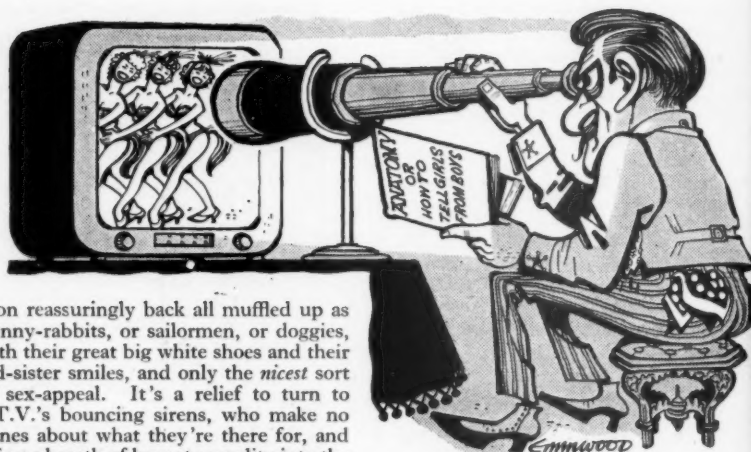


ON THE AIR

Bring Up the Girls!

I HAVE never been able to warm to a chorus-girl three inches high. I contend that the more you shrink her the less successfully she will fulfil her function in entertainment—which, let's face it, is a harmlessly erotic function, and very nice too. I have therefore noted with pleasure that television producers are abandoning their attempts to reproduce a traditional stage chorus line on the little screen. Those long lines of minute blobs, capering in unison like a maniac frieze, were meaningless. The tendency now is to concentrate on three or four figures at a time, with the result that the camera can operate at a closer range, and we can see what the girls are made of. From this it has been but a short step to devising more imaginative routines, involving the use of attractive young ladies who can dance as well as kick, and the result is something you can't experience anywhere but on television. I may be simple, but it seems to me that this is the sort of thing that television is for, and the sooner the powers that be stop trying to imitate all kinds of stage shows (oh, those melancholy Brian Rix manglings of Ben Travers!) the nearer they'll get to treating television as a new medium. After all, it's been a new medium now for close on a quarter of a century: high time something was stirring.

I.T.V. are still ahead of B.B.C. in this matter of chorus-girls. Auntie B.B.C. would have us believe that her young ladies are *very nice*—you could trust your husband with any one of them: and I'm damned if that's a healthy approach to the subject. The Toppers, for instance, may now and then wear skirts that don't quite hide their bottoms, but they're



soon reassuringly back all muffled up as bunny-rabbits, or sailormen, or doggies, with their great big white shoes and their kid-sister smiles, and only the *nicest* sort of sex-appeal. It's a relief to turn to I.T.V.'s bouncing sirens, who make no bones about what they're there for, and bring a breath of honest carnality into the sitting-room. If that's what we *want* in the sitting-room (it's debatable), let's have it done properly, with no holds barred.

Higher up the cultural ladder, Wolf Mankowitz's new series *Conflict* (Associated Rediffusion) dares to bring an intelligent chin-wag into the sitting-room—no phony fireworks, no fancy "production," just a quarter of an hour's thoughtful conversation. His opening discussion (with Malcolm Muggeridge) was admirable. The billing ("Wolf Mankowitz in *Conflict* with So-and-so") is misleading, and should be altered if the rest of the series is to follow the same pattern.

To judge by the first of the new Jack Benny programmes (B.B.C.) it would seem that this sad-faced stalwart is less funny in situation comedy than he is with a stooge and a fiddle in front of the tabs. All the same, he can carry a

twenty-five minute show—and few of our native comics have managed that successfully.

The gobblers-up of ephemeral pulp-magazine blood-and-thunder continue to be indulged without let or hindrance. Berkely Mather's *Big Guns* series opened with a tale that schoolboys might have tolerated twenty years ago, although it seemed to be aimed at to-day's adults. Ah, well—at least it didn't plumb the same sorry depths as *Mark Saber*. And at least there was no attempt to keep the author's name quiet. I notice that this is a growing tendency in *TV Times*. For example, in *Hour of Suspense* on January 2 there was a playlet, called *Cross Current*, of marvellously unrelieved puerility, and the *TV Times* kept mum about who wrote it. I can tell you, though, because I read the credits. It was a Mr. Harold Jackbloom, and I hope he's duly sorry. HENRY TURTON



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